

Manta Ray's 'Estratexa' is masterful

The band performs Saturday in Portland at Berbaty's Pan

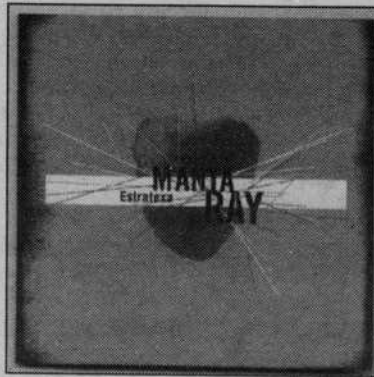
By Carl Sundberg
Pulse Columnist

Manta Ray is a band to keep your eye on. They may just take the world by storm with their furiously passionate polyrhythms, odd-timed stratospheric riffing and hypnotic, meditative grooves.

Much like its peers The Mars Volta, Trans Am, Rumah Sakit or even latter-day Radiohead, Manta Ray embodies the often ignored notion of musical progress. This is less akin to some of the other new "post/punk/indie" rock bands like Jet or The Strokes.

But Manta Ray, coming all the way from Spain, resembles none of the aforementioned bands. It merely fits into the notion that progress is a good thing in music. On its most recent album, "Estratexa," Manta Ray unleashes some of the most innovative riffs, textures and songs in contemporary rock.

Trippy repetitive keyboard bleeps and swirling guitar are surrounded by tribal thunder-drumming and grinding



Courtesy

Manta Ray's "Estratexa" has innovative sounds and lyrics in English and Spanish.

bass notes as singer José García croons fluidly in English and Spanish.

The songs on "Estratexa" are built layer upon layer. There are no real hooks or verse-chorus-verse formats that are easily picked out. The opening song, "Take a Look," starts out sounding like a telephone left off the hook but is immediately followed by a rolling fretless bass line and vocals, then by a gentle looping guitar and finally some more keyboard sounds. As the song slowly builds and frolics, the drummer lays low, like the song is being launched into space. About three minutes into the piece, the rhythm changes into

something completely different, subtle and flowing, as if the song has finally reached the edge of the atmosphere where it orbits until the final dissolving moments of its existence.

Immediately following "Take A Look" is the tricky-timed drumming of the title track, "Estratexa." Like the first song, this piece is built with layers, giving it an odd, meditative feel. There are no words on "Estratexa," but you don't even really notice because before you know it the third song, "Qué Niño Soy," is upon you like a rushing animal.

The standout tracks are easily "Asalto," an instrumental missile attack lasting just under two minutes, and "Monotonía," which sounds as if it is channeling some sort of dark energy from the core of sound's primal beginnings. It is brief, eerie and intense.

What strikes you most about Manta Ray is how they are able to create such complex-sounding songs with the most simplistic of playing. There are no flashy heroes in this band. They work together brilliantly as a good team, as a force, which is able to channel the primal sounds of something more powerful than anyone of them could do individually. The atmospheric textures that Manta Ray create coupled with the shamanistic-like rhythms make for one seriously

profound aural experience.

However, in some regards, the four members of Manta Ray create more of a visual experience than an auditory one. They almost induce visions with their music. In fact, in 2001, at The Gijon International Film Festival in Spain, Manta Ray composed and performed a concert entitled "Score" that later became a record and a video.

Since 1994, they have recorded four full length albums, three EPs, and a bundle of singles. They will perform April 17 at Berbaty's Pan in Portland, located at 10 SW Third Ave., with the Sword's Project. Tickets are \$7 in advance and \$8 the day of the show. The show begins at 9:30 p.m.

Contact the Pulse columnist at carlsundberg@dailyemerald.com.

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CD REVIEW

PULSE BRIEF

Skerik's Critters Buggin' will play WOW Hall April 18

Critters Buggin' will bring its acid-punk-voodoo-tribal-freak jazz to WOW Hall on April 18 to support a new album being released on Ropeadope Records this month. Also on the bill is special guest Piece of Meat Theatre.

Hailing from Seattle, Critters Buggin' includes all-star musicians Skerik on saxophone, Matt Chamberlain on drums, Brad Houser on bass and Mike Dillion on percussion.

Skerik made a name for himself playing with such acts as his recent Skerik's Syncopated Taint Septet, Tutatar and Les Claypool's Fearless Flying Frog Brigade. Chamberlain has laid out the beat for David Bowie, Tori Amos and Fiona Apple. Houser plays with Hairy Apes and freelances around Austin, Texas. Dillion played with Brave Combo and Garage a Trois.

Doors open at 8 p.m. and showtime is 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. WOW Hall is located at 291 W. Eighth Ave.

- Carl Sundberg

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