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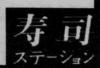
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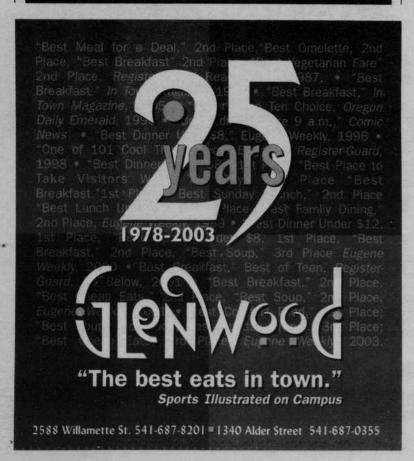
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# White's 'hick-hop' album blends depth and humor

Jim White's 'Drill a Hole in that Substrate and Tell Me What You See' provides musings with its music

By Aaron Shakra

The existence of Jim White might be likened to some ripple in the fabric of space-time. His music exists somewhere in the ether of old "Twin Peaks" episodes, 1950s science fiction films and the religious iconography of Pensacola, Fla., his hometown. His third album is titled "Drill A Hole In That Substrate And Tell Me What You See."



During a summer 2002 performance in Portland, White took the stage

with nothing but a set of guitars, a drum machine (which he introduced as "Mr. Casio, my Japanese drummer who never misses a beat"), and a loop box. Between songs, he told a story in which he received a phone call from himself in New York City seven years into the future. Seven years later, he described a drunken night in the city where he placed the phone call. This is the world of Jim White - filled with strange loops

By most standards of musical success, White is also an anomaly. He didn't make his debut until his 40s, when "Wrong-Eyed Jesus (Mysterious Tale Of How I Shouted)" was released in 1997. Previously, the performer was a fashion model, New York City cab driver and professional surfer. He is also a graduate from New York University's film school.

While all this might portray White as some kind of novelty act, the haunting quality of his music resonates with depth. And while White's deft sense of humor helps him spin a good yarn, the story itself remains deadly serious. This characteristic imbues his music with a great sense of beauty

A band saw accident impaired his ability to play guitar, but this did not discourage White, who credits the injury to improving his music, which he has described as "hick-hop." "Combing My Hair In A Brand New Style" the third tune off the new album probably best exemplifies this style. White flows that he doesn't want any "self professed saviors of my soul / no lowdown top-secret CIA moles / no crackpot psychopath behavior specialists / no Shriners / no shyness / no decisive moment existentialist / that's right / no vegetable / mineral / no institution / gonna disrupt the constitution of my ingenious hairdo solution " over a funky-jazz country beat.

Another great example of this form might be the hilarious "If Jesus Drove A Motor Home." The song is informed by hip-hop more in its music than in the lyrics, which are delivered by White in a thick country drawl.

Since he has garnered a significant amount of critical acclaim for his music, White's releases have increasingly attracted high-profile musicians. This time around, the list is nearly overwhelming. Singers such as Aimee Mann and members from Barenaked Ladies and the Sadies are just a few.

The initial fear in combining this list of contributors is that it will lead to an unfocused album. Fortunately, White and co-producer Joe Henry kept true to White's sound, remaining contiguous

with previous albums while expanding the overall sound - banjos, mandolins, horns, sampling and loops are omnipresent.

Like many of White's tunes, "Borrowed Wings" is a sly religious narrative that begins, "That night we drank wine from the crazy well / shot a shotgun out the window of our automobile / we was young we was wild but we sure had our fun / 'til the sheriff caught up with us and we tried to run."

The chorus: "Now we return to earth on borrowed wings / Left from the shoulders of sweet dreaming angels / Now the world beyond the world we never will reach / Because you can't get to heaven on no borrowed wings." The punchy banjo and tripped-out churchy organ bridge, along with the displaced female backing vocals, make this tune one of the disc's highlights.

Other tracks stay truer to a simpler folk-country sensibility, such as "That Girl From Brownsville Texas" or the closer, "Phone Booth In Heaven." "Alabama Chrome" (a slang reference for duct tape) begins with a tinny guitar progression that sounds like something from a Who album before adding jangly country- and Persian(!)inspired riffs.

This album is an absolute pleasure, too; the production creates a sound totally unlike pop music while still using many of the same tried-and-true techniques. Only the opening track, "Static On The Radio," might be considered a failure because Mann, in duet with White, sounds totally out of place.

"Drill A Hole in That Substrate And Tell Me What You See" will be released on Luaka Bop Records next month. Highly recommended.

Contact the Pulse editor at aaronshakra@dailyemerald.com.

## SOLO

continued from page 9

Johnson: There are a lot of indie labels. They're still at it.

Emerald: With bands like Beat Happening, you became known for putting the emotional content ahead of technique. Is that still part of your

Johnson: I just try to go with the feeling and go where that takes me. That's still my basic modus operandi.

Emerald: Do people respond well

Johnson: I don't worry about it too much. If they don't like it then there are plenty of other distractions they can spend their time on. Video games or whatever. I'm just another carnival

sideshow they're walking by and if they decided to stop, then that's great. If not, then there is another one right next door.

Emerald: Do you have any plans for the future?

Johnson: I plan to be touring for the next few months and that's about it. I enjoy performing and I think I'm pretty good at it. I just want to get out there a bit more.

Emerald: How does the record company run without you there?

Johnson: I'm lucky enough to have some very good employees who are able to handle their responsibilities without my direct daily oversight.

Emerald: How many employees do you have?

Johnson: I have four. Emerald: Anything happening at Koo

that you are particularly excited about?

Johnson: We just released a new album by Old Time Relijun that is really quite exciting. Also the new Mirah album is very powerful.

Emerald: How would you describe your own music?

Johnson: I tend to write songs in classic manner. Nothing too terribly radical. That's the format and I just go with the feeling in terms of con-

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