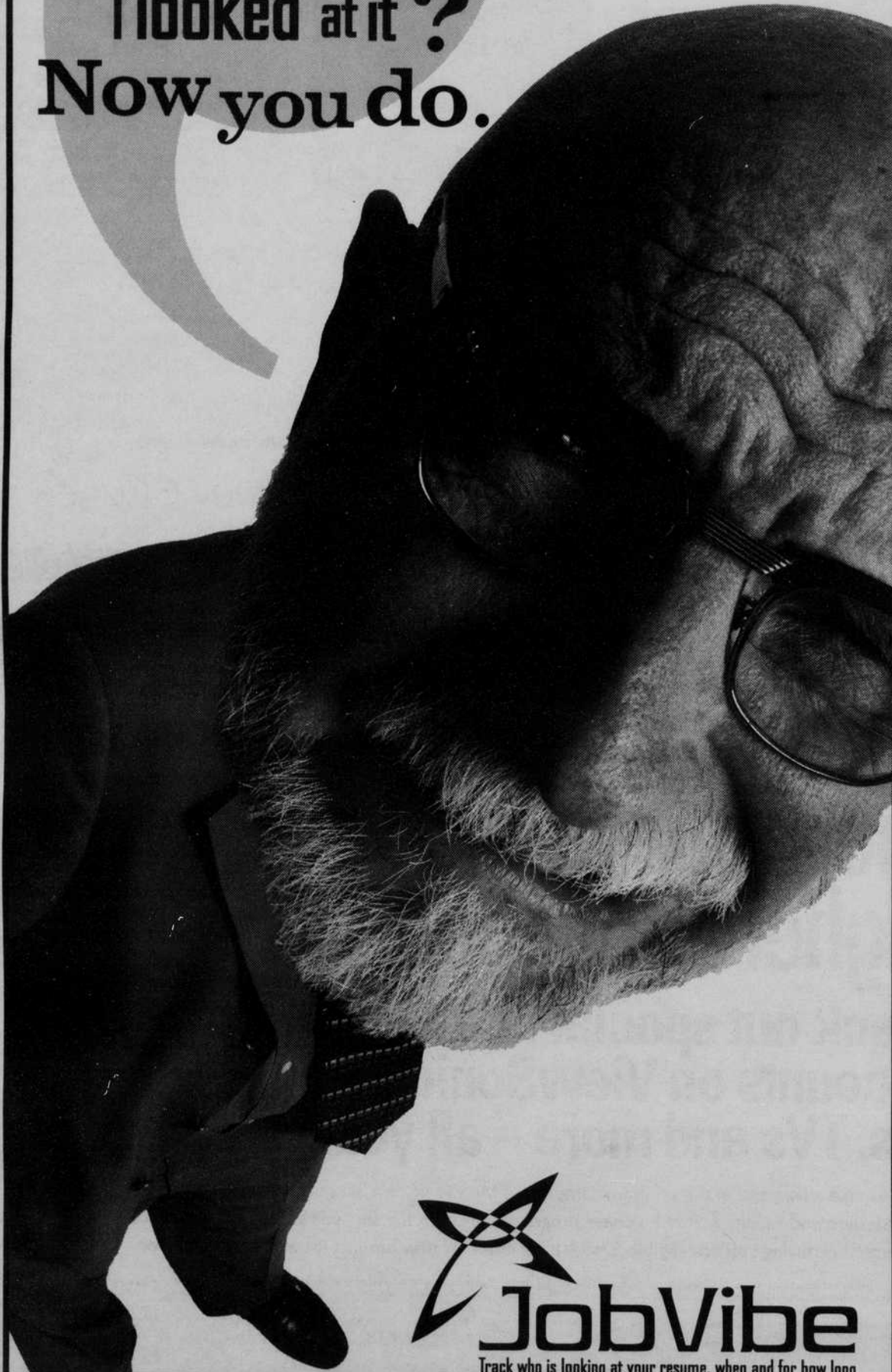


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# Sleater-Kinney trio combine politics, intricate melodies

The feminist rock outfit softens the raw punch of its music and lyrics with a pop sensibility

By Ryan Nyburg  
Senior Pulse Reporter

There are few things more uplifting than a great rock 'n' roll show. The volume, the communal joy and the wicked tempo of the experience all work together to make one hell of an event.

## CONCERT REVIEW

It can leave a concertgoer feeling delightfully empty and mellow, and this is precisely the experience rockers Sleater-Kinney offered at the McDonald Theatre on Tuesday night. From the looks on the faces of the crowd, there were quite a few takers.

The concert featured three Northwest bands and began with the "mystery band," the Grails, whose performance went largely unadvertised (not to mention relatively unattended). The band specializes in a style of droning rock instrumental with an emphasis on country and Celtic stylings, mostly provided by an amplified violin. It's an interesting and unique sound, if at times rather plodding.

Next up was the duo Quasi, a group which has to stand as one of the most developed pop groups working in America today. A lot of upstart bands talk about doing pop music while keeping an experimental edge. Quasi actually does it, opening its set with nearly five minutes of drilling keyboard and drum noise. And then, without even missing a beat, they play pop music.

The band's combination of sweetly melodic lyrics and abrasive keyboard riffs can at times be a tough pill to swallow, but when working at top form they define a fiercely independent form of rock music. Quasi sounds simultaneously familiar and

like nothing you have ever heard before, a paradox which only the truly adept can pull off.

But for truly adept rock 'n' rollers, it's hard to beat Sleater-Kinney. With the twin guitar assault of Corin Tucker and Carrie Brownstein, and Janet Weiss (also drummer for Quasi) banging out militant beats, the band is a formidable trio.

They're also fun to watch. Tucker wails the anthemic melodies with conviction while Brownstein does a dance that looks like a combination of the Robot and the Time Warp. It's great to see a band that enjoys making music so much, though maybe they had some incentive since Tucker's family (she's a Eugene native) was in attendance.

The set was a combination of older and newer material with a lot of emphasis in their last release, 2002's "One Beat." The band has come a long way from their riot grrl beginnings, with the melodies becoming more intricate, the influences more eclectic and the music more powerful.

It is also worth noting the band's strong political convictions, which have become more sophisticated over the years. Take the song "Far Away," off of "One Beat." In it, Tucker describes watching the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on television with her newborn baby on her lap. The song takes that inherent sadness and changes it into righteous anger directed at the Bush administration. The correlation between the two emotions is strong, and the powerhouse riffs drive the point home like a nail into a coffin.

It's great to find a band this good so close to home, and since they apparently have plans for another album, we'll all have something to look forward to in the next year or so. Tuesday's performance was an example of a group working at the top of its abilities, yet, since the band has advanced with every passing year, it seems they still might have more to offer.

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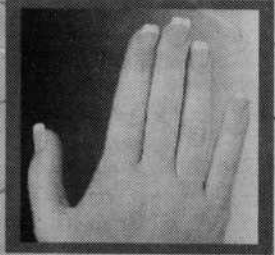
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