

■ CD review

Moody Blues turn to country gold on new tribute album

Meanwhile, the debut album from The Futureheads mixes their musical influences into catchy pop rock

BY RYAN NYBURG
PULSE EDITOR

So what does an album by a British post-punk rock band have in common with a collection featuring the songs of a popular 1970s prog-rock band performed bluegrass style? Nothing, really. Except for being in this review together.

The first of those albums is the self-titled debut from The Futureheads, which functions as a basic collection of catchy pop rock and not much else. On that level, it works brilliantly. The songs are short, smart and listenable, never overstaying their welcome. While the band has its obvious influences (The Jam stands out in particular), they distill them into a cohesive sound made up of angular guitar chords, uplifting vocal harmonies and bouncy rhythms that never get

bogged down in the trappings of the already tired dance-punk movement.

The album mixes songs from the band's earlier singles and EPs with new recordings, so it is easy to see that the band is already beginning to make advances in their songwriting abilities. Early singles, such as the pop-rock gem "Robot," sit alongside the doo-wop based "Danger of the Water." At times the band sounds like the Kinks circa 1966-68, when they were moving away from the straight-ahead rock sound and on the verge of making "The Village Green Preservation Society." If this analogy holds up, good things can be expected from the Futureheads.

And now for a complete change in mood. If I told you that a group of Nashville session musicians got together to make a tribute album to the

Moody Blues, you would probably think that the result would be some kind of ultra-cheesy piece of culture fertilizer, right? That just goes to prove what an idiot you are. Produced by mandolin player Dave Harvey, "Moody Bluegrass: A Nashville Tribute to the Moody Blues" is a well thought out, wonderfully realized piece of music, which re-imagines the songs of the band that at times personified all of the worst indulgences of progressive rock.

By streamlining the songs into the bluegrass format, the performers find what made them so interesting in the first place. The instrumentation is beautiful, with some of the solo work surpassing the original material (the banjo truly is the most divine sounding instrument in the entire canon of music). It might come as a surprise that songs like "Ride My See-Saw" and "The Voice" make great country music, but it actually makes sense once you hear it. They even add a



'Moody Bluegrass: A Nashville Tribute to the Moody Blues,' takes the songs of the 1970s rock band and turns them into some of the best country music to be released this year.

COURTESY

sense of urgency to cuts like "I'm Just a Singer (in a Rock 'n' Roll Band)."

While tribute albums are usually (and rightfully) condemned to a musical ghetto inhabited by Christmas

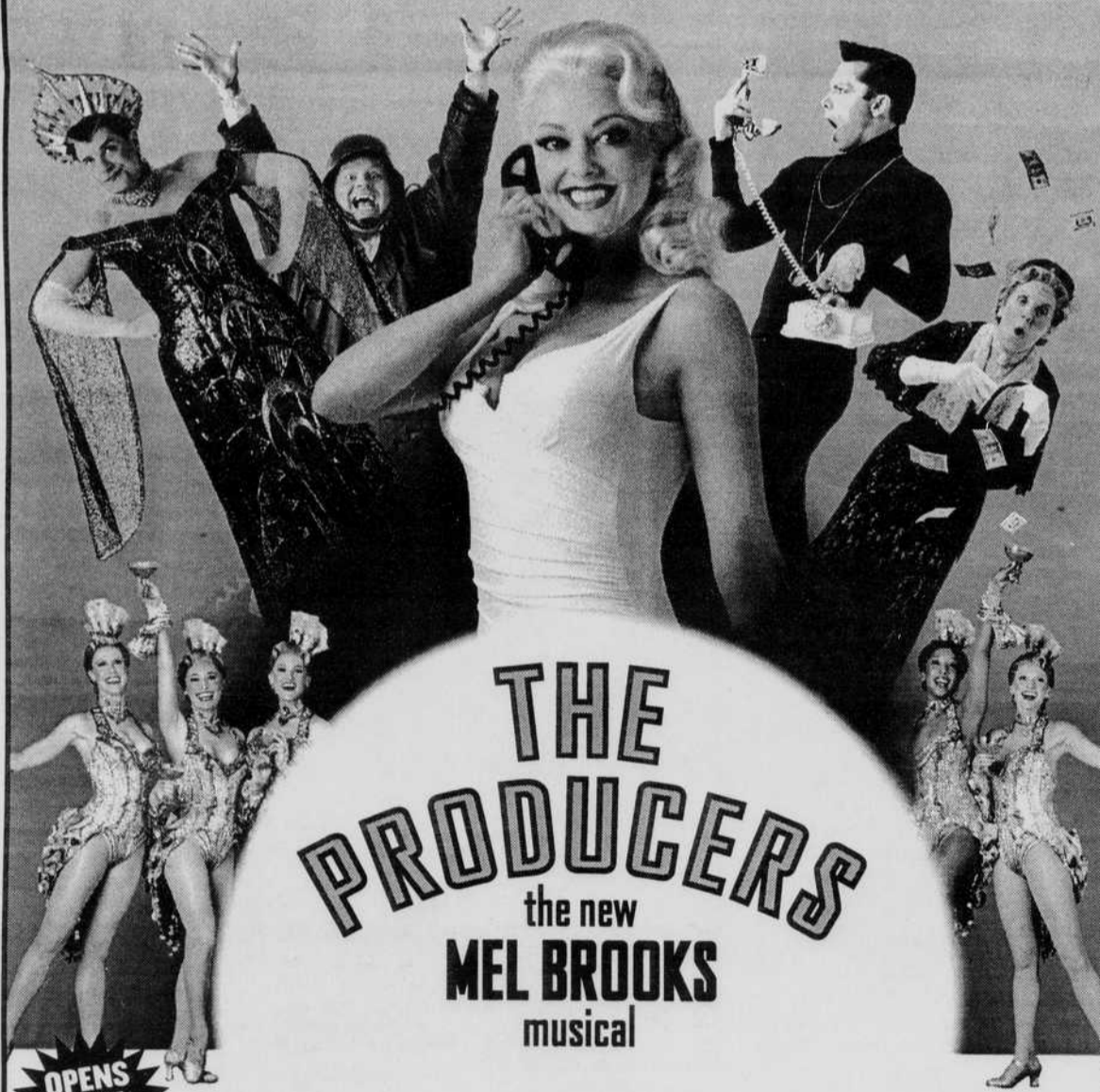
albums and easy listening records, "Moody Bluegrass" stands as one of the best of its kind.

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IN BRIEF

Col. Claypool's Bucket of Bernie Brains

Col. Claypool's Bucket of Bernie Brains, an all-star collaboration put together by bassist Les Claypool, will be performing in Eugene Friday as part of its first-ever national tour. The group features the legendary Les Claypool on bass and Buckethead on guitar, as well as former Primus drummer Brain, and Bernie Worrell, the original keyboardist and primary collaborator with George Clinton in both Parliament and Funkadelic, who has also performed and recorded with Talking Heads.

Originally assembled as a one-time-only, improvisational performance at the 2002 Bonnaroo Festival in Tennessee, Col. Claypool's Bucket of Bernie Brains went on to play a few exclusive club performances and record a live album. On Sept. 21, Claypool released a full-length album on his own record label, Prawn Song. Claypool describes the album as "a traveling, oversized sock-puppet show spawned by the characters of a Tobe Hooper film and scored by Danny Elfman on bad acid."

Col. Claypool's Bucket of Bernie Brains will perform tomorrow at the McDonald Theatre. The doors open at 7 p.m. and the show starts at 8 p.m. Tickets are on sale online at

McDonald Theatre Ticketing and at all Safeway TicketsWest outlets for \$18.50. If not sold out, tickets will also be available at the McDonald Theatre Box Office on the day of the show for \$20 beginning at 5:30 p.m.

'... And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead'

The Austin, Texas, post-punk group "...And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead" will be playing its first-ever Eugene performance this weekend. The show is part of a tour to support its upcoming album, "Worlds Apart," set for release in January.

The band is known for explosive live shows, which regularly involve manic stage antics and overwhelming energy. According to the band's record label, "...And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead" has been barred from a number of Austin venues for showering audiences with shards of smashed-up guitars, as well as a number of other performance-related offenses.

"...And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead" will be performing at the WOW Hall on Sunday. Doors open at 8 p.m. and the show begins at 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$12 for students and \$14 for the general public and are currently available at the WOW Hall and the University Ticket Office.

— Ryan Murphey

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