

# Highball with Les Claypool

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On the evening of Friday, June 2, I sat in the bar at the Roseland Theater in downtown Portland with my partner in hedonism, E.E. West. We just finished a shot of Bushmills with a Fat Tire chaser and were waiting for the concert to begin. The concert was none other than Les Claypool (of Primus fame), one of the greatest bass players of our time.

While in the bar, West and I were surrounded by freaks, goons, broom-heads, tweakers, stoners and belligerent drunks. They too were waiting for Claypool's patented bass grooves and narrative song-talk lyrics. We fit right in, especially West. He was adorned with a hat that looked like a cross between something one might find in a Dr. Seuss book and a giant walrus.

Suddenly, after an attractive 39-year-old married woman told me she was sexy but I needed to lose weight, the concert began. West and I quickly went upstairs to the mezzanine. He was still laughing about my awkward flirtations with the married woman and I was still smiling from it.

The concert floor was packed and filled with the scents of hashish, sweat and pot smoke. West and I maneuvered our way through the crowd to get closer to the stage and witness the Bass Master General firsthand.

There Claypool was, slapping his Thompson piccolo bass amidst



Internet Graphic

Les Claypool's latest album is "Of Whales and Woe." Claypool played at the Roseland Theater on June 2 as part of the album tour. More information can be found at [www.lesclaypool.com](http://www.lesclaypool.com).

two percussionists, a saxophonist and a sitar player. They were playing "Highball with the Devil" from Claypool's first solo record of the same name. The music sent a wave of euphoria through me like inhaling a cigarette for the first time ...

or it just could have been the booze I had earlier. Whatever it was, the music sounded brilliant and I knew the best was yet to come. Also, West and I needed another beer.

While chugging down more Fat Tire, West and I watched and listened to Claypool on the projection screen conveniently placed in the bar. He was playing songs from his new album "Of Whales and Woe." I must say I was impressed. While they weren't as good as the songs on his "Live Frogs" albums, they were still a pleasure to listen to. These songs, and the rest of the set, sounded like a mixture of neopsychedelic prog-rock, jazz fusion and p-funk with a taste of India (courtesy of the sitar).

What happened next was simply stunning. West and I sat in awe as the two percussionists went head to head in a battle for eternal glory. One of them had a full drum kit with a double-bass pedal and the other had a smaller drum kit with marimbas, congo drums and a xylophone. The sound they were creating was very tribal and perfectly timed. After a few minutes of watching this epic showdown, West and I decided to head back upstairs.

We made it back just in time to see the percussion battle's finale. Claypool came back on stage while the crowd roared. West and I were applauding as well and decided to join the mosh pit - which was later dubbed the "love pit" by a fan that we believe had too much hallucinogens for the evening ... or not enough.

After knocking each other senseless in the "love pit" for a few songs, West and I headed back downstairs to take some interviews ... and more booze.

West and I sat down with our drinks and spoke to Lindsay, a concert-goer who was enjoying the show but was upset that the opening act Rasputina, a "cello-rock" trio, didn't show up.

"There is something terribly wrong when an opening act doesn't show up and nobody says anything," Lindsay said in-between drags of a cigarette she bummed from me.

After speaking with the dejected Lindsay we spoke with the grinning Beth seated at the table behind us. Beth was sporting a Buckethead t-shirt and eyes more glazed than a box of Krispy Kremes.

"I love it! It's great!" she said smiling widely. "Primus was my first concert ever - Lollapalooza '93 in Minneapolis!"

Once the show was over, West and I headed outside to meet up with our fellow Clackamas Print writer N.P. Delzell, who was picking us up. We almost walked over to a felony police stop that was in progress. Our journalistic instincts told us we should, but the alcohol in our heads said it was a bad idea.

On the way home, when Delzell wasn't holla'n at girls standing outside of The Voodoo Lounge and The Noche, I couldn't stop thinking about how amazing the concert was or staring at West's hat. It wasn't the greatest concert experience I've ever had, but it comes damn close.



CLAYPOOL



Stereotypes come in all shapes and sizes. Men are arrogant and stupid, women are shallow and vain, African Americans are good at basketball and white people can't dance unless they're gay.

The stereotype about video gamers is that we're all great at math, socially clueless, vastly overweight and can't attract a woman to save our lives. Well, as a video gamer myself, that notion is just offensive. The stereotypes just aren't true at all ... it so happens I hate math!

I believe that many stereotypes can be overcome if a person is willing to work to correct them. So with that in mind, I want to offer to my gaming friends a few good ways to get off their butts and come out of their dungeons during the summer months while there's plenty of free time and dry weather.

The arcade, for starters, seems like the perfect place for some social interaction without taking the gamer too far out of his comfortable environment (well ... minus the broadband and a headset). And the cost of most of the local arcades is pretty minimal, so a decent gamer would be able to kill a good few hours on only \$5 or less. The "social interaction" part is important though, so make sure you bring a friend, cousin, little sibling - anybody, really, that counts as a warm, intelligent human being. The value of human interaction does not have to be lost on a person just because they play video games, and although I'm not offended by that stereotype, it's still, like, really dumb.

The movies are another great way to get in some quality human-to-human time without having to stretch too far out of a gamer's own comfort zone. Most movie theaters in the area have a student rate, so it doesn't cost as much to see a flick if you have your student ID card handy. Again, the "social" part is important, so be sure to IM some friends or leave a message on their MySpace inviting them to join in the adventures outside of the cave. Movie theaters mean dark rooms, large high-resolution screens and funny smells ... it's just like home.

My whole point here is that nobody has to conform to a stereotype if they don't want to. Once a gamer realizes which stereotypes are true of them, it becomes a personal decision to remain a part of that stereotype or to step outside of what's expected of them and do something they know is healthy. Something like going outside, talking to girls, getting a job (or showering) ... something that lets the world know "Yes, I play video games, but I'm a person too!"

There are lots of new experiences available to gamers this summer, and it's important that we, as a people, do everything we can to make sure we don't become just another stereotype. So - for God's sake - get up, turn off the console every couple days and go outside.

Nerd.

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