

Wobblers win at Trail's End

Liz Travers

The Clackamas Print

Every Wednesday at the Trail's End Saloon is an open mic night, like many bars have – but this bar features the blues band Francine West and the High Speed Wobblers, who are definitely not worth missing.

The band is comprised of five music veterans who only recently came together last June 17 as a surprise for lead singer Francine West's birthday.

Although West hasn't been in a band for a while, she wasn't worried during the group's performance on April 4.

"I like the energy. A couple [members] came out of retirement like I did," West said.

Though West normally sings lead, guitarist Russ Finley stepped up on the first song of their set. Finley, who has been playing guitar since he was about seven, paired his smooth, yet slightly gravelly, voice to his guitar solo, which was like a bluesy version of Carlos Santana.

Next up came Jeff Ommert on bass guitar. His solo had a surprising, lilting sound and a tempo that complemented the other band members as opposed to overpowering them.

Ommert, who played with his former band, Liquid Blues, for 20 years, enjoys being on stage again with this new band.

"They are way different and great to be around," said Ommert.

During their second song, keyboardist Lou Solomon played his part with a sense of enthusiasm that is normally reserved for winning the lottery. That kind of talent is to be expected from a man who has played his instrument for over 50 years.

"[The band] is easy to work with. They call out the keys, and away we go," said Solomon.

The sound that came out of West's mouth during the third song didn't seem like it could fit in her small frame. It had a sultry allure that might make one think of a lounge singer back in the '30s.

While she sang, drummer Phillip Tucker tore it up on his kit. His playing seemed intimidating to the people who came to perform.

Tucker gets plenty of practice though being a full-time musician in several bands. Drums have always been his passion.

"Listening to music was the thing that stood out to me and

got me really excited," he said.

Though some audience members came to perform, many were there just to see this stellar band. Anyone who loves to

listen to, or play, music can find a place there on Wednesdays.

So, remember to give Portland bands some love, or a sandwich; they are musicians.



Photo by Liz Travers Clackamas Print

Francine West and Russ Finley performing at the Trails End Saloon on its open mic night.

'Year of the Dog' bites, licks itself for PETA

Elizabeth Hitz

The Clackamas Print

The Year of the Dog was brought to you in part by: the Bill, Dog By Dog Foundation, Best Friends Animal Society, New Leash on Life Association and, of course, everyone's favorite animal rights organization ... PETA.

At the start of the film, happy-go-lucky secretary Peggy Spade (Molly Shannon) lives her life alongside her canine companion, Pencil. Cute, if overused.

But by the end of the movie, when Spade declares that there are other kinds of love than for people, including one for animals, the viewer may begin to feel like he or she has been dragged through

the doggy park one too many times.

Frankly, it's one long, drawn-out ad for animal rights activism.

However, the film has a few redeeming qualities. Anyone previously oblivious to animal cruelty may become more interested in becoming a vegan.

It also gives a decent portrayal of why extremes in life,

like apathy or radicalism, are dangerous, and how much faith it takes to give up everything for a belief.

However, Regina King's performance as Spade's ring-hunting best friend, Leyla, and John Pais as the boss, in full *The Office* tradition, almost single-handedly carry a plot otherwise full of shallow characters, bad acting and long, blank, melancholy stares.

Within a dead main plot, subplots pop up with a vengeance. Controversy abounds: everything from misplaced blame, cheating boyfriends and unhealthy obsessions to ethical questions left for the audience to ponder.

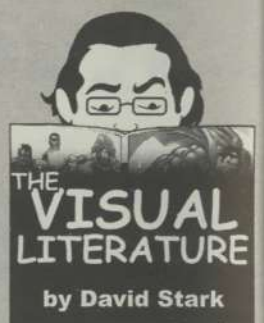
At one point, Spade takes her seven-year-old niece to see farm animals, and then to a poultry farm to "see what happens after Babe." Neither can bear to go in, and they end up sobbing in each other's arms.

Later, Spade's overprotective sister-in-law calls Spade, screaming that her child is traumatized and refuses to even eat a ham sandwich. Spade bellows back that her niece should be allowed to make her own decisions.

And then there are the loose ends that shout, "We tried to invoke thought ... but failed": a pending marriage built on a lie, unresolved conflicts between characters and Spade, who seems likely to have another emotional breakdown.

This movie is not worth the price of a ticket, unless that ticket belongs to a vegan, a PETA member, or the generally fuzzy and feather-loving.

And for Pete's sake, "SAVE THE CHICKENS!"



'Revenge' was never so delicious.

With the upcoming arrival of *Spider-Man 3*, I started combing through my collection, looking for some Spider-Man comics to refresh me. After about 15 minutes, I came across one of my favorite Spidey trade paperbacks, *Spider-Man: Revenge of the Sinister Six*.

Revenge of the Sinister Six is the oldest trade paperback in my admittedly-rather-large collection. Being from the early 1990s, it has a distinctly dated feel to it. The art is standard from the time it came out, and the fashions within make me chuckle. The story is average, nothing you haven't seen before.

So, why do I like this comic so much?

It's simple. *Revenge of the Sinister Six* is the quintessential bad-guys-team-up-against-a-hero story.

Our very own friendly neighborhood Spider-Man hears about a get-together of his foes, finds them and then gets pounded. The story progresses with the grandiose plans of the villains continuing. Spidey manages to get a few heroes to help him, but even then, it's to no avail.

By the end of the story, our hero is facing the combined might of the many enemies who have amassed against him, and when all seems lost, a veritable army of super heroes arrives in the span of only a few pages to save the world.

Revenge of the Sinister Six had everything a nine-year-old who loved comics could want. There was action, a bunch of heroes (so I didn't have to spend my allowance on different comics), and it was remarkably engrossing.

Reading it today, I notice all the little things that I missed back then. The relationship troubles that Peter and Mary-Jane were having make sense to me now. The little homages and Easter eggs are readily apparent since I've been around a bit more.

One of my favorite bits about *Revenge of the Sinister Six* are the Sinister Six themselves. Led by the brilliant, yet sociopathic, Doctor Octopus, the team was somewhat updated after losing a few members to death and, in one case, morality, but are nonetheless one of the deadliest incarnations of the group. What amused me greatly was the fact that each of the villains found Spider-Man to be their constant nemesis, but together they couldn't be bothered by him.

And Spider-Man himself was pretty much par for the course. He went through his life much as he always did, just getting by with his job and managing affairs at home with his wife, Mary-Jane.

So, while *Revenge of the Sinister Six* may not be an outstanding comic book, it is the kind of story that you keep coming back to time and time again.

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