

'Each other's all we've got'

Father John Misty's third album is a sardonic sermon on hope, despair and the doom-laden future of humanity



PHOTO BY GUY LOWNDES

BY KATHERINE SMYRK
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Father John Misty's back catalog is enough to convince you that he is a brilliant, slightly unhinged misanthropist who can't wait for the whole lot to fall to pieces. And he's the first to admit it.

"I don't think you have to go much further than listening to my music to go, well this is obviously a somewhat mentally unstable, quasi-religious weirdo," he said with a laugh over the phone. "In court, my album would be Article One in terms of proving that point."

Known to the state as Joshua Tillman, the musician was an unenthusiastic drummer for popular folk band Fleet Foxes right when they were hitting fame, had a short stint playing slow, brooding folk as J Tillman and

has since released three albums under the pseudonym Father John Misty – which he insists is a name that randomly came to him while on a magic mushroom trip up a tree, and is not an alter-ego. The first, "Fear Fun" (2012), jangles with a country twang, and introduced the world to his peculiarly verbose style and no-holds-barred lyrics. The second, "I Love You, Honeybear" (2015), is ostensibly an album about the end of the world but is also a kind of letter of confession about how a cynic fell in love with his wife, Emma Elizabeth Tillman. A favorite example of this would be the lyric, "Everything is doomed/ And nothing will be spared/ But I love you, honeybear."

On stage, Tillman appears as a tall drink of water with a bushy beard – gyrating tirelessly across the stage in a suit, moaning and crooning his complex lyrics. It can be a strange, dark and entrancing affair. But his latest album, "Pure Comedy," is probably the darkest he's produced so far.

Even the cover art is enough to raise some red flags. The illustration by The New Yorker's Edward Steed is a caterwaul of disturbing cartoon characters: manically grinning football players attacking each other with chainsaws while the crowd cheers; a preacher violently worshipping a wedding cake and piles of money; a woman holding a leash attached to a businessman who's yelling on the

IF YOU GO

Father John Misty will perform Aug. 26 at Project Pabst in Portland's Waterfront Park. For the full lineup and ticket information, visit portland.projectpabst.com.

See MUSIC, page 11