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THURSDAY JULY 10

SIAMESE
FRIDAY JULY 11

HAMSA LILA
WEDNESDAY JULY 16

ALPHA CHARLIE
SATURDAY JULY 19

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SATURDAY JULY 26

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music BY BRETT CAMPBELL



Band of Brothers

Nevilles lead parade of world fusion music to Eugene.

With Country Fair, Art and the Vineyard, and the Bach Festival all erupting, don't overlook some strong club shows coming up this month, several of them playing intriguing blends and fusions of world music.

Just as New Orleans is a crossroads for many strains of music — Caribbean, African, blues, R&B, soul, jazz, country, Cajun — its most notable musical family, the **Neville Brothers**, is an amalgam of many influences: Art was lending his keyboards and vocals to R&B hits from the late 1950s on, and as the leader of the Meters, pumped out danceable funk for decades beginning in the 1960s. Aaron has been a soul crooner extraordinaire for four decades — his "Tell it Like it Is" topped the charts in 1967, and he did it again a few years ago in duets with Linda Ronstadt. Charles brought a jazz flavor with his sultry sax, then later introduced Native American influences and added a dose of reggae as well as percussion and gritty vocals to offset Aaron's angelic voice.

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After performing in their separate genres for years, the brothers united in 1976 for the classic *Wild Tchoupitoulas* album, then merged their flavors into the Neville's musical melting pot, producing a richly danceable, soulful blend. Soon they were opening for the Rolling Stones, topping critics' lists, and building a reputation as America's greatest cult band. Pop success followed in the 1990s, and even though some recent recordings have lacked the fire of their finest work, their live shows are always worth the ticket, drawing an audience as eclectic as the Brothers' influences: tie-dyed Deadheads to soul worshipers to reggae and alternative fans, all of them grooving to the Brothers' irresistibly funky beat.

At the WOMAD festival a couple summers ago, a tie-dye-shirted Charles told me he and the band have a special affection for Eugene (Q: "What do you like about Eugene?" A: "The hippies!"), since he lived here during a period of rehabilitation some years ago, so their show

at the McDonald Theatre on July 8 may be more than just another gig for the brothers.

When **Cosmos Magaya** was eight years old, he decided he wanted to play the mbira, that zingy instrument with metal keys suspended over a gourd and played with the thumbs to make an unforgettably zingy sound. One of his relatives in Zimbabwe, whose Shona people have raised the intricate art of mbira ensemble to one of the world's most compelling musical traditions, was a master of the instrument, but didn't want a little brat messing with his precious instrument. So Magaya watched him closely when he played. Every day when he went out to work the fields, Magaya would sneak in and spend hours teaching himself to play.

For the past generation, as touring performer and scholar, Magaya has spread mbira music around the world, teaching at Stanford and Duke Universities (among others), and helping establish a strong base of performers in the Pacific Northwest — including Eugene. On

Thursday, July 17, Magaya joins Eugene's **Vakarsara Mbira Ensemble** at Luna. Featuring singing, the spidery webs of zingy mbira sound, and hoshho (shaker), this show's a must for world music fans.

Another West Coast band that draws on African roots, the Bay Area-based **Hamsa Lila**, brings trance grooves to the Wild Duck on Wednesday, July 16. Yes, it's white hippies playing African-influenced sounds — perfect for Eugene — but this colorfully garbed band of singers, dancers, and multi-instrumentalists (sintir, guitars, percussion, guimbri, lap steel, saz, djembe, talking drum, kalimba, flutes, clarinet, saxophone, rhaita, lira, synth, qarqab, African harp, kora and samples) puts on a musically appealing and visually exciting show.

And on July 10, the Duck brings the jazz/funk B-3 organ and drums duo **Benevento/Russo Duo** to town, with the electric piano, bass, and guitar trio Jacob Fred Jazz Odyssey (which also has a jam band following) opening.

Yet another group that's been blending jam-band grooves with world music influences is the Boulder-based **Motet**, hitting the WOW Hall Monday, July 14. Blending Latin jazz, funk grooves, West African, Brazilian and Cuban drum rhythms and blaring sax, the group features players who've studied Afro-Cuban rhythms at the source, in Havana. **EW**

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