BY VANESSA SALVIA

The Jazz Mandolin Project performs Thursday, July 24 at WOW Hall.

Mandolin Men

JMP fuses jazz with world sounds.

When most people think of jazz instrumentation, mandolin is not usually the first piece of musical equipment to come to mind. That's just why members of the **Jazz Mandolin Project** are hoping you'll come to their Thursday show at WOW Hall. These musicians really want to change your mind about the humble mandolin, and they believe that if you give their music a listen, you'll realize how versatile the mandolin really is.

Mandolinist and primary composer Jamie Masefield knows that the mandolin is a "universal folk instrument" found in many musical cultures in some form or another. With JMP, Masefield has recast the mandolin "into a modern brew of straight-ahead, avant-garde and fusion jazz along with sounds from around the world." This Burlington, Vermont-based group formed in 1993 and debuted with a self-titled CD in 1996. A year later Masefield disbanded the original lineup in favor of a revolving lineup of musicians to keep things fresh, hence the name of the resulting recording, *Tour de Flux*. The CD *After Dinner Jams* followed.

The group released a new CD in March, *Jungle Tango*. The 10-song, 46-minute CD features musicians Danton Boller on upright bass and Ari Hoenig on drums. Guest musicians include Gil Goldstein from the Pat Metheny Group and Chris Lovejoy of Charlie Hunter's group. The touring group will consist of Masefield along with drummer on the New York City scene Danny Shapiro Weiss. Boller will continue as veteran bassist.

One of the possible future changes for the band is the addition of a fourth member. For certain NYC Knitting Factory shows on this tour, trumpeter Matt Shulman will join the group.

JMP has found a loyal following among jazz and jam band enthusiasts across the country and around the world. An appealing aspect of the approach of Masefield and his musical compatriots is finding a common ground from which people from all walks of life can enjoy his music. Fans of "high-brow" jazz can find plenty of agile antics while younger fans with less experience with traditional jazz also leave fulfilled.

Jacob Koozie, frontman of local "drunk country" band the **Koozies**, revealed to me in an interview that when the foursome first started playing together they envisioned a "Country Fair, minstrel sort of thing." Luckily for audiences everywhere, the band decided to switch horses midstream, as it were, and find their fortunes telling stories about "whiskey, women and old west justice" instead. Vocalist and guitarist Jacob Koozie, Tuan Koozie (vocals and guitar) and Jason Koozie (bass) grew up together in Astoria, and all have played in other local bands, including the popular group Technicolor Yawn. After playing together a while, drummer Ken Koozie signed on, and the Koozies of today were born.

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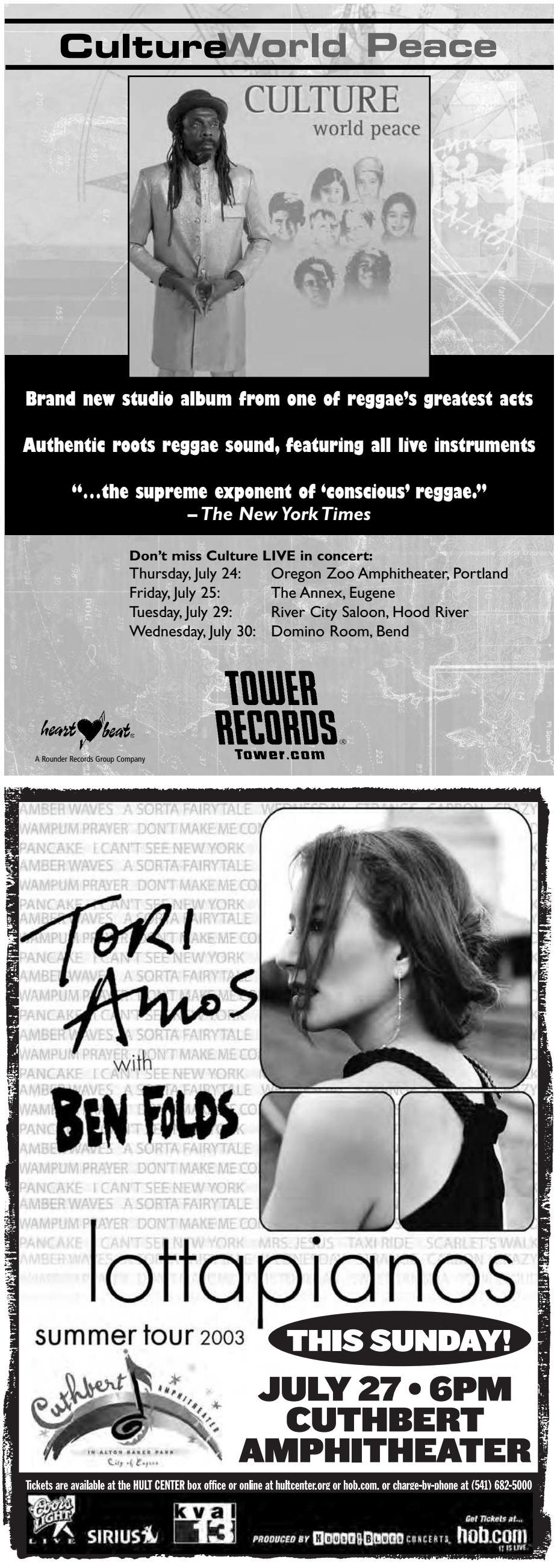
"We started out doing a much more acoustic thing than what we're doing now. We kind of got sidetracked once we actually started playing, drinking and partying. It turned into a much more rambunctious, crazy sound," explains Jacob. "What we're doing now is a lot more fun."

Though the three founding members have been in Eugene sine 1991, the Koozies didn't take shape until 2001. With thanks to the band's sponsorship by Budweiser, the Koozies (whose namesake is the ubiquitous foam can cooler) have sold out of the first pressing of their debut CD, *Keep It Cool*, and are briskly selling the second pressing. *Keep It Cool* keeps the energy and humor soaring with songs like "Why I Stole Your Horse," "Saving Cheyenne" and the epic "Whiskey Around." With a second CD planned for a fall release, the band has no shortage of material, and plans to keep playing as much as possible. For an evening filled with wild west revelry, catch The Koozies Friday at WOW Hall, along with local band **Toad In The Hole**. *EW*