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Joshua Redman and Randy Newman
perform at the Shedd.



Pop and Jazz's Finest Newman, Redman at the Shedd.

Randy Newman is the unlikelyst of pop stars: nasal voice; wry, even cynical attitude; pre-rock influences (the great songwriters of the 1930s); and shifting identity (social critic in his songs about racism and politics, misunderstood satirist in "Short People," soundtrack composer in films from *Ragtime* to *Monsters Inc.*) And yet, for more than three decades, Newman has croaked his way from cult fave to one of the most enduring pop musicians of the era, with songs about three levels deeper in irony and character than practically any of his contemporaries.

1991 Thelonius Monk competition. His first albums delivered on that promise, revealing a precocious poise to complement his freshness of vision.

He even tried improvising on more recent pop songs than the treadworn standards (e.g. "Autumn Leaves") that jazzers have been vamping on for decades, but his more recent albums seemed to have less to say. Perhaps sensing this, Redman has recently veered off in a new direction, an "electric, groove-based thing" with his new trio featuring pianist/organist Sam Yahel and drummer extraordinaire Brian Blade. He's one of the stars who's

Newman has croaked his way from cult fave to one of the most enduring pop musicians of the era.

Born into a famous musical family (his uncle Alfred scored dozens of the most famous movies ever made in Hollywood's Golden Age) Newman wrote music for "Peyton Place" and other TV shows. Then, in the late 1960s, his early songs were covered by singers such as Judy Collins, Harry Nilsson, and Three Dog Night ("Mama Told Me Not to Come").

While they and many others unearthed the hidden pop hooks that turned his mordant musings into hits, Newman turned his neuroses and insecurities (variously attributed to childhood traumas like cross-eyedness or being Jewish in New Orleans) into darkly funny story songs featuring complex, unreliable narrators and other characters who seemed more at home in short stories than pop songs. But his humor and irony concealed a melancholy that sometimes emerged in beautiful songs like "Marie."

After his 1974 breakthrough with the classic *Sail Away*, Newman became a star, his status solidified by "Short People," "I Love LA," and a few other minor hits, including "You've Got a Friend in Me" from *Toy Story*.

When you put it all together, Newman's quirky work amounts to one of the most substantial — and singular — bodies of popular music of the last few decades. His crusty, sarcastic wit really shines (if that's the word) through in live performances, so attendance at his appearance this Friday, Oct. 24 at the Shedd is mandatory for fans of literate songwriting and American popular music.

The Shedd hosts one of the biggest names in jazz on Wednesday, Nov. 5 when **Joshua Redman** brings his Elastic Band to town. Another product of a musical family (his dad is avant garde bassist Dewey Redman), the tenor giant vaulted to stardom by winning the

remaking jazz for the new millennium, so this is a show for both casual and serious jazz fans, and it supports a good cause (Stand for Children) to boot.

Another good cause is the Willamette Jazz Society, and Luna is hosting a benefit for it on Oct. 30, featuring **Matthew Jorgensen +451**. The rising young Seattle drummer/composer has worked with jazz stars such as Reggie Workman, Cecil McBee, and Vincent Herring, and he makes some of the most appealing new jazz I've heard in quite awhile.

On Saturday, Oct. 25, Sam Bond's is bringing yet another Seattle ensemble, the **Billies** saxophone quartet. The all-woman band is named after Billy Tipton, the pianist who was posthumously revealed to be concealing her gender for decades, and they've been drawing worldwide attention for music that incorporates New Orleans jump groove to hip hop, punk to East European, klezmer and more.

The **Oregon Mozart Players** concerts Nov. 1 and 2 are among the most attractive classical concerts of the year, featuring music by Gluck, Rossini, and the enchanting Pulcinella suite by Stravinsky. The shows also boast one of the most magical and beautiful works of music ever written: Maurice Ravel's Mother Goose suite.

For a glimpse of the darker side of the 20th century, the Eugene Symphony's concert Thursday, Oct. 23 features Shostakovich's ferocious, symphonic Violin Concerto with soloist *Ilya Gringolts*, plus Beethoven's Symphony #2.

Finally, don't forget one of the coolest bands in the West, **Pink Martini**, bringing its saucy pop/jazz/Latin/lounge blend to the McDonald Theatre Nov. 1. If you've never experienced this groovy 10-piece band, don't miss this chance. **EW**