



Not Exotic

Downhome simplicity with Dolorean and hot Hank III.

Portland ensemble **Dolorean** hits town on Saturday, performing at Gutenberg College. Guitarist and vocalist Al James, who transplanted himself to Portland from Silverton two years ago, began playing with drummer Ben Nugent, bassist Jeff Saltzman and keyboardist Jay Clarke, and it stuck.

The combination, he says, has "taken some form or another for three or four years. There's been a core group of people involved but it's flexible. We end up playing with a lot of different people. Most of it is built around friendships and people that you enjoy playing with." That accommodating attitude helps the band weather the times that keyboardist Clarke is unavailable — he also plays keys

Hank Williams III, who will be appearing Tuesday at John Henry's. Yes, that's Hank Williams, given name Shelton, son of Hank Williams Jr. and grandson of country music's legendary voice.

The younger Williams' road to the music business was a bit more twisted than his forebears, finding him stomping through KISS, Black Sabbath, AC/DC and Ted Nugent at the tender age of 10. Though he first performed onstage with his dad at that age, by his teens, Williams was diving into cathartic punk and thrash music.

The 26-year-old "Rising Outlaw" has said, "I didn't really start listening to country from a singer/songwriter's point of view until I was 20 or 21. I'd never tapped into

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with Portland's popular The Standard.

Dolorean released its recording debut, *Not Exotic*, in November on the Yep Roc label. The music is eggshell delicate and somber, with traces of Cat Power's atmospherism, Nick Drake's mournfulness and Neil Young's honesty.

While principal songwriter James says, "I'm really a happy person," he pens gloomy murder ballads ("Traded For Fire"), gauzy odes to insomnia ("Morningwatch"), and tunes on lost faith, guilt and deceit. He says his inspiration "comes organically" and results from "listening to music and liking it enough that you want to start doing it yourself."

Now, James says, Dolorean is considering re-printing its first recording, made four years ago, which was "more of a homemade deal, just to introduce people to ourselves." Though *Not Exotic* just went coast to coast in November, James says, "We have a backlog of songs and another record that's kind of taking shape. It wouldn't come out for quite a while."

At Saturday's show Clarke will be absent due to a Standard tour, James Adair will be playing bass, and opening act **Dave Parker** may join the band on stage as well.

At the opposite end of music's spectrum is

melodies, touching people's souls and making them cry." Williams finally shucked this "anger and chaos" role, walked into the skin he was born into, and recorded his first album, *Rising Outlaw*, for Curb Records. The man recorded his own songs, such as the mournful autobiographical tune, "On My Own," as well as Johnny Cash's "Cocaine Blues" and Wayne Hancock's "Thunderstorms and Neon Signs."

Williams is akin to a shapeshifter when he performs live, channeling his energies into two sets, which he calls a "thrashing, raw-boned one" for the hard rock and punk fans, and an "orthodox straight ahead country show for older fans."

Hey, I object! Love of traditional country music and hard-rocking attitude transcends all generation gaps and is one of the reasons audiences everywhere have embraced Williams III as a charismatic performer who bares it all on stage. The country music establishment in Nashville, however, has yet to fully appreciate Williams III and accept his brand of outlaw, which is one thing that keeps him going. Check out this show and find out what the Grand Ole Opry folks are missing out on.

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