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UNDER GROUND

In search of Eugene's underground scene.

BY Jonathan Amabisca

By definition, finding an underground scene would require my taking giant steps beyond the average Starbucks environment. It begins with high hopes and a sense of ambition; almost a craving that can only be contained by the accidental discovery of the next phase of Drum 'n' Bass. At best, there should be a 1970's, early '80s punk movement festering around the back alleys. Whatever it may be, there should be some new, secret scene around here, one I can't expect to stumble upon in some dance club.

Any scene worthy of a recognizable status starts with a buzz and a following by the true believers. John Henry's, Diablo's, Wetlands and WOW Hall all seem promising places to start in search of those inclined toward an independent status, hopefully leading me underground to the real scene. A good couple of weekends spent hanging around these joints should help clear the path toward the next hardcore discovery.

But the search dies almost instantly at Diablo's. There, while the band Stacked does their rendition of Madonna's "Music," there is the expected crowd enjoying and moving with the music, but the *size* of the crowd leaves much to be desired. There's enough room — too *much* room — to sit, to walk, and hardly any chance for one to "accidentally" spill some of his drink on another person, were one so inclined. Diablo's should be packed. The Red Bull/Vodka only costs \$5 and a band that made Madonna acceptable to a small crowd of heathens is worth visiting. But this an underground scene does not make.

Local musician Scott Von Rocket, formerly of The Wristockets, knows and feels the lacking environment, one swallowing any underground scene quicker than its growth. "Just within the last few months, any bands that you could find to support a rock underground have either moved away or broken up. Even my band is on hia-



Sawyer Family at the Wetlands

BOBBIE WILLIS

tus," states Von Rocket.

Bob Fennessy and Mike Tugwell at the WOW Hall wished they could help with my search. "I was part of the early punk scene," says Tugwell. "So I've seen the ups and downs of the underground movement. Right now, we're in a lull."

A few years ago, these venues would be filled with spiky-haired folks wearing more leather than the cows from which it was made. Now the average John Henry's or Diablo's crowd is sparser, while places like Tsunami and The Jungle, purveyors of the ever expanding hip-hop scene, are filled beyond capacity.

"There is an underground scene," says Tricia Raes, local resident and hater of clubs. "It's more under-underground: bluegrass. It's here. It's huge where I'm from, Denver, Col., and it's weird how small it is here."

And that's what it's come to for Eugene's underground. From punk and techno to bluegrass — the wave of the future.

Time to drink.

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