

TOYS ARE US

LOCAL ART BAND REALLY PLAYS. BY HELEN SHUMACHER

About a year ago, while enrolled in a class on digital video and audio, Mary Rasmussen, an art student at the University of Oregon, began to take an interest in the work of John Cage. It was while learning about Cage and his ideas on the art of noise that a toy leaf blower from Value Village inspired Rasmussen to start a band.

She shared her idea for a band with several friends at Max's Tavern, and that night The Playskool Fools and The Noisy Toys featuring the Weightlifter became Eugene's only band that plays children's toys instead of guitars. Even though most songs include a keyboard and programmed beats, the sounds made from second-hand plastic toys are the main element of the band's music.

The line-up has changed a couple of times due to members moving away, but the Noisy Toys currently consists of Rasmussen, Nathan Hazard, Liz Lessner, Timothy Cooke, Alexis Stevens and Judah Switzer who goes by "The Weightlifter" and commonly graces the stage in a pair of American flag patterned spandex shorts.

Because the Noisy Toys is made up

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mostly of art students instead of musicians, the band takes a more performance-based approach to their shows, which they describe as a danceable combination of design and improv, or a post-apocalyptic Fleetwood Mac.

"We want to keep the element of art really apparent," Rasmussen said. "Every aspect of what we do is about design, from flyers to costumes."

Each Noisy Toys show is different because the performances are catered to the venue. When they opened up for Tracy and the Plastics last fall in the EMU fishbowl at the university, the band wore service outfits and hairnets to match their cafeteria type surroundings.

"The aim is to create something totally new every time," Rasmussen said.

Future plans for the band include a tour and producing a music video for each of their songs, and maybe even an album. The Playskool Fools and the Noisy Toys can next be seen playing at the Tiny Tavern on April 24. **EW**

too late

EUGENE'S LATE-NIGHT ACTION COMES UP SHORT. BY KARMAN RATLIFF

It's 3:36 am on a Sunday morning, and I am slouched over in a tan plastic booth in the back of an all night diner. Staring at my tepid appetizer combo, I retrace in my head the night's activities that led me to this booth in Shari's Restaurant: I had ran out of money to drink at the bar, then found myself at a house party. A quick stop at a convenience store for more beer, then, suddenly, I was here.

Frankly, it's unsurprising, because at this hour in Eugene, there aren't a lot of better places to be. My options? There's your run of the mill corporate diner, where at any hour of the day you'll notice that every food item is mysteriously the same color. Or I could head over to Dunkin' Donuts and discover the secrets of the jelly donut. I could take myself down into the underground world of porn stores, where it's safe to say no one will look you in the eye (unless they're just there to buy nitrous oxide whip-its). The strip clubs closed a half hour ago, but if I make a mad dash, I bet I could still make it to Pita Pit before it closes at 4 am.

Instead, here I am watching as an exhausted woman with a monotone voice named Connie tops off my coffee mug, even though I haven't touched it in at least ten minutes. I begin to peel the bread off of

my seasoned chicken finger and submerge it in sauce, meanwhile striking up a conversation with the waitress.

"Have you had a busy night? What time do you get to go home?" I ask.

"I get off at six."

She clearly has other things to be doing than talking to me. At the next table, an entire family, baby in tow, devours the last bits of their toast and French fries (all the same color) acting as if it's perfectly normal for them to be sitting here at this hour. I continue asking about the regular clientele at Shari's at nearly four a.m.

Connie surrenders to me and stops moving momentarily, staring at me as she explains that the majority of the late night customers have but one common bond: drunkenness.

"What's the most exciting thing that has ever happened to you while working?" I ask, hoping to ignite a spark of conversation.

"Well, I don't know," she replies impatiently. "Last night we had two ladies sitting in different booths who ended up throwing coffee at each other. That's about it."

I continue searching for nightlife until dawn approaches, but only drunks and bums, cops and graffiti writers are awake at this time. Defeated, I head home. **EW**



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