

Joanne Rand plays Luna tonight.



Consumed by Music

Zeller, Rand & Furtado highlight the week.

Four years ago Eugene lost one of its talented young jazz players when **James Zeller**— who was born here in 1981— graduated from South Eugene High and headed to The Big Apple for the jazz program at New School University. While in New York Zeller studied under and performed with some of the biggest names in the genre, including Wynton Marsalis, Cuban percussionist Candido, bassist Buster Williams and trumpeter Charles Tolliver. Zeller is in town to celebrate his spring 2004 graduation with family and planned the Saturday, Aug. 21 show at Luna to “keep from being bored” here. I spoke with Zeller from his home in New York to find out more.

Zeller left Eugene at age 18 but is nonchalant about the significance of leaving little Eugene for the big city at such a young age. “It seemed like a natural step,” he says. Music has been a part of Zeller’s life since childhood, when his mother began teaching him piano at age 6. His mother and grandmother were both

organists and his father sang in church choir and played trumpet in college. Zeller later played cello, but when his father bought him his first trombone at age 12, he found his desire to play jazz. “I don’t know why I was drawn to wind instruments,” he says. “Must be some kind of natural attraction. I think the trombone matches my voice and I’ve always been a fan of male singers like Johnny Hartman and Frank Sinatra. So I think it was a natural thing for me.” Zeller heard jazz on the radio and became interested in jazz pianists, especially Horace Silver. “He was an introduction to me. The first time I heard my prime influence, the trombonist J. J. Johnson, was on a Horace Silver record,” says Zeller.

Nowadays in New York Zeller’s life is “consumed” by music. “I practice a lot and I go see music regularly” he says. Though he’s graduated, he is still actively learning and absorbing the active New York scene. “The real education in New York is just the people that you meet, there’s just so many musicians. Not

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— Terry Tempest Williams speaking about Joanne Rand’s music

only people from the older generation but also my peers who have all been an inspiration because there’s so many fine musicians in New York,” he explains.

The musicians Zeller will perform with are not the same as the ones that appear on his self-produced CD, *Introducing the James Zeller Sextet*, with the exception of bassist Renee Cruz. Cruz, John Wood on piano, Joe Manis on tenor saxophone and drummer Kevin Congleton, all friends of Zeller’s, will join him on stage. “When I lived in Eugene we all played together in various bands for about four years,” says Zeller. “I’ve written some new music just for the group and we’re just going to get together and do a spontaneous, loose show and whatever happens, happens, but I imagine it’s going to sound great, because everyone is a very serious musician.” Let’s wish this former Eugenean the best of luck as he pursues his career on the opposite coast.

Luna will host singer/songwriter **Joanne Rand** on Thursday, Aug. 19. Her “psychedelic-folk-revival sound” is celebrated coast to coast and naturalist author Terry Tempest Williams describes her music as “acoustic ritual— her voice opens the doors of creation.” Born and raised in Georgia, Rand found her spiritual home here in the Pacific Northwest after traveling across the country as a teenager. It was the strength she found through her relationship with the Siskiyou River that allowed her to reveal herself as a radical songwriter, and since that time in the late ’80s Rand has incorporated stories of her life into her music. The loss of her brother, songwriter Jordan Rand, due to AIDS, and the birth of her daughter in 1999 have been part of the transformative and healing music she has shared. Rand lived in Northern California but moved back to the Siskiyou Mountains last year following the January release of her re-

cent CD *Into The River*. Rand debuted in 1988 on a cassette-only release entitled *Home*. Five more releases followed from 1989 to 1999: *Choosing Sides*, *Live*, *The Monkey Puzzle*, *Grant Me Eyes* and *Family History*. She will be joined by her backing band, Rhythm of the Open Hearts.

Tony Furtado will appear Friday, Aug. 20 at McDonald Theater. His newest CD, *These Chains*, was released July 27 and it marks his debut in earnest as a singer/songwriter in addition to a much-respected guitarist and picker. A former Grand National banjo champion, Furtado has mastered the slide guitar and delved deeply into “eclectic-bluegrass-rock-blues fusion.” He has long been revered as a master picker and now he’s showing off his vocal prowess too, on the original songs of *These Chains*. With Bonnie Raitt-ish blues-based rockers and Jackson Browne-ian musical narratives, *These Chains* will catapult Furtado into the realm of new American roots music. Now a resident of Los Angeles, Furtado produced *These Chains* with the help of Dusty Wakeman, who produced Lucinda Williams, Dwight Yoakam and Anne McCue. Though the nine songs were penned by Furtado, he did enlist collaborative help from NRBQ’s Al Anderson on “The Prisoner,” Jim Lauderdale on “Need a Friend,” and Jules Shear on “Standing in the Rain.” Drummer Jim Christie and guitarist Doug Pettibone from Williams’ current band, keyboardist Skip Edwards, Bonedaddies percussionist Michael Tempo, the two members of eastmountainsouth and backing vocalist Gia Ciambotti from Badly Drawn Boy were all assembled to help Furtado out on *These Chains*. Furtado has reinvented himself musically many times in the past. Who knows where his muse will lead him next, but for now we have a great new CD full of rootsy rock to enjoy. **EW**

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