



Northwest Royale closes out the Battle of the Bands Saturday at the Black Forest.

Bring Your Own Band

Black Forest's Battle of the Bands celebrates Eugene's local scene.

There's a battle taking place at Eugene's Black Forest Tavern. No, not Bush vs. Kerry, but Eugene musical outfits struggling to win over the crowd. That's right, it's a Battle of the Bands (BOTB) contest, slated for Saturday night during the Eugene Celebration week-end. Ten bands from the greater Eugene area will compete for the ultimate prize of audience adoration and the princely sum of 1,000 smackers. But this highly anticipated event, which is sure to be a big draw, taking place right in the heart of Eugene's downtown at 50 E. 11th Ave., is not an officially-sanctioned Eugene Celebration event. The reason might surprise you.

Black Forest owner Mike Neria contacted Eugene Celebration organizers requesting to be an official venue and was dismayed to learn that in order to participate, festival officials wanted the club to have out-of-town bands perform. Mystified by this, Neria said he told organizer Steve Remington, "You call this the Eugene Celebration, and you're using everybody but Eugene musicians." Neria believes he has made the right choice to forego official status, concluding, "I think that the (BOTB) turnout is going to supercede our expectations and next year the EC will take a hard look at including us."

The Black Forest underwent an ownership change a year and a half ago and revamped the bar as well as their booking policy. They no longer charge a cover for any show (including this one); instead bands receive 25 percent of bar sales. The policy change is great for bands, because the performers don't get shafted when the doorman lets their friends in without paying, and it's great for the customers who don't have to choose between next day's lunch money and a night out.

Neria said 90 bands a month play his stage, a large number for a venue of that size, and he knows which bands have the biggest draws. The bands chosen to participate in the battle each had a following of 75 to 100 people at Battle preliminaries and will likely draw loads of young people downtown, something Neria sees as an underrepresented

demographic at the Celebration.

"Their demographic is pointed at like 30 to 40 year-olds," he says. "They're not even coming close to getting the kids down here." Five judges — radio, record store and music industry personalities — will rank the bands based on originality, composition, stage presence, overall performance, crowd response and musicianship. Only original material without vulgarity is allowed. Bands must adhere to a strict schedule of 15 minutes playtime and 15 minutes breakdown.

Kicking off the battle at 5 pm will be **IDM. On The First Day They Were Kittens** follows, with a sound they call "experimental metal, punk and grunge." **Dirty Digits** comes next, then **Under the Stairs**. UTS is a band representing the popularity of aggressive-edged metal music with Eugene audiences. They have a sharp, clean sound that's enhanced by impressive guitar work. **Big Wamp'um**, a trio who have been together only about nine months, describe their music as fun rock and roll.

Another rock band, **Station Wag**, follows, with **The Crimes of Ambition** closely on their tails. The Crimes profess that they will never be a PBR band. Their powerhouse drummer and seductively-voiced female singer guide the music down a path of punk-tinged poetic rock. Guitarist Juan Camacho has years of experience as guitarist for The Detonators and Los Hermanos Sanchez, the surfier predecessor to Los Mex Pistols. **Non-Dairy Larry** features members of popular group (the concubot), an experimental electronic combo. The final bands are **Conception** and **Whore**, two other aggro-metal bands. Conception takes cues from Tool, or closer to home, Floater. In other words, they play technically proficient alterna-metal with smart lyrics and a cohesive feel. At 10 pm, **Domeshot** will perform while the judges convene. Later, **Northwest Royale**, another local band to watch, will shake the roof. Royale has a coveted opening slot for Slayer at Portland's Roseland on Dec. 12.

The battle winner will be announced at 11 pm.

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