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MUSIC BY VANESSA SALVIA

Crown City Rockers play John Henry's Monday.



Rock Time

Eugene top venue continues to rock.

In the late '80s and early '90s Eugene had a vibrant underground music scene.

Hundreds of shows took place each year in people's basements, featuring touring and local bands such as Snakepit with Mike Johnson, who went on to record with Dinosaur Jr. and have a solo career.

The Detonators' guitarist Bruce Hartnell wanted to translate that scene's energy into an above-ground club, and in 1992, with the help of some financial partners, John Henry's shot from the womb along Willamette Street and said "Sup, dawg?"

The club nurtured a (mostly) punk scene for one sweaty, smelly decade, then folded when St. Vincent de Paul took over the property at 11th and Broadway. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, albeit at bureaucratic speed, John Henry's reopened two years ago at 77 W. Broadway under new ownership.

Booking agent Keith Martin became involved in the first John Henry's four years ago as a bartender, then took over booking in 2001. He said he hoped the new club "would provide an alternative for the different stuff that comes through town and stuff that doesn't really show up on the radar but there's an audience for."

When I asked Martin what criteria he uses to book the club, he laughingly said he throws darts to decide. That sums up the club's attitude: anything goes. "We're wide open to whoever, whatever, whenever. We're broad strokes as far as what we do." That could mean country from Hank Williams III, free jazz with Sex Mob, bluegrass, electronica or DJ'd dance nights.

"We still pick up the odds and ends, the Burlesque show is a perfect example," he says. "No one else is doing anything like that." That show, which takes place every Sunday night, features carnival-type performers, dance revues and burlesque booty shaking. Local DJs Steve Sawada and Sean Mediaclast put on Freaks in the House on Saturdays once a month. "It's a weird event

that fits in at the club," Martin said.

Martin said he hopes everyone feels comfortable at John Henry's, from just-turned 21-ers doing the pub crawl to senior citizens, such as the 85-year-old woman who showed up for the recent Wayne Hancock show. "I think we've done a good job of spanning the age gap." And the crowd seems respectful, said Martin. "It's been amazing downtown. We haven't had any problems."

The new club kept some of the dark and dim aesthetic of the Willamette Street location, but that wasn't necessarily intentional. According to Martin, that was a "happy accident." Club owners tried to make the space, which is long and narrow as opposed to cavernous like the old club, seem intimate, so bands would feel more in touch with the audience, enabling the energy of the live performance to reach more of the crowd.

Coming up: One worthy show is **Crown City Rockers** on Sept. 27. The popular group features two awesome MCs, a turntablist, keyboards, bass and drums, for a live hip-hop treat which leaves audiences slack-jawed. "You know a band is good when there is absolutely no one buying drinks!" Martin said, referring to the last time the band played the club. "With this band they're either standing in front of the stage mesmerized or dancing. Every single [audience member] was crowded up as close to the stage as they could get!"

John Henry's also has a country western swing show scheduled for Sept. 28 featuring the **Whopner County Country Allstars** along with **Little Bit & the Customatics**. A night of experimental and local indie rock crystallizes on the Sept. 24 with **Crash Engine, Mine Thirtyseven, A Mind Like Yours** and **Outspent**.

An early heads up on another incredible show, happening Monday, Oct. 18: **Eagles of Death Metal**, featuring Kyuss and Queens of the Stone Age guitarist Josh Homme. Wow! Watch *EW* Clubs and Music for more details on this caustic metal review. **EW**

★ UPCOMING SHOWS AND WEEKLY EVENTS AT JOHN HENRY'S ★

Monday September 27th @ 10 PM

 **CROWN CITY ROCKERS** *StrangeFolks*
Light-headed (POX)

Tuesday September 28th @ 10 PM

LIL BIT & THE CUSTOMATICS
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS
THE WHOPNER COUNTY
COUNTRY ALL-STARS

Saturday October 16th @ 10 PM

JOHNNY CASH
TRIBUTE NIGHT

Every Thursday @ 10 PM
the legendary dance party

80's NIGHT

Every Sunday @ 10 PM

JOHN HENRY'S
BROADWAY REVUE
LIVE BURLESQUE SHOW

Every Wednesday @ 10 PM

REGGAE VS.
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DJ KAL EL VS. DJ TEKNEEK

77 W. Broadway #342-3358 www.johnhenryclub.com