

Grit is good

The **Two Gallants** are just some guys with scruffy hair and a bored look that could pretty easily sum up the "whatever" generation. They look kind of average, like they might be throwbacks to grunge.

But they are so, so much more.

Adam Stephens' raw, bloody vocals carry the stripped-down, almost elemental music he creates with fellow Gallant, Tyson Vogel. Somewhere between punk rock, '90s indie and Bob Dylan, they ripped out a niche that's as alive as a squirming jar of worms, as rough as sandpaper and as angry as a Raid-soaked hornet's nest.

With lyrics that transcend the average schlock and reach the level of true poetry, songs such as "Nothing To You" off their new CD, *The Throes*, are a caustic mix of battery acid lyrics, honey melodies and inky darkness.

In the background on "Crow Jane," a cello (played by Perez Gratz) moans like a howling ghost. On other songs they work in harmonica so that it sounds like another aching, crooning voice. This is not folk music by any stretch of the imagination and yet the Two Gallants draw heavily on that genre, more like a vampire sucking blood than a muse seeking inspiration.

It's so good it raises the hair on the back of your neck and makes you turn around to make sure no one's sneaking in the door with a knife. It's something about the juxtaposition of Stephen's voice, as gentle as barbed wire, and the beautiful melodies that float behind him as he rips your heart out.

More than any band in recent years, the Two Gallants have mastered "less is more," laying down emotion that simultaneously entrances you, sucks you in and overwhelms you.

Don't miss their show Thursday, Dec. 23 at Luckey's.

Magical Music

Considering the small size and limited range of notes on an mbira, Richard Crandell creates amazingly sweet melodies with surprisingly complex layers and rhythms on his new CD, *Mbira Magic*.

The title is apt; the songs do have a magical quality in the way they flow and gently soothe you, moving from section to section effortlessly in a gentle wash of echoey, calming notes.

"It's pronounced mmm-beer-uh," Crandell said when he dropped off his CD at *Eugene Weekly*. "People say EM-beer-uh, but it's more subtle than that."

If you've never seen an mbira, it's essentially a bunch of pieces of metal of different lengths and thicknesses held down at one end. They're almost plucked with the fingers but more in the way you'd play a piano key than a guitar string.

Crandell is performing at noon Saturday, Dec. 18 and at 2 pm Wednesday, Dec. 22 in Holiday Hall at the Holiday Market.

If you're overwhelmed with shopping and the holiday rush, stop in for the show. You'll leave feeling calm, relaxed and refreshed.

writers: WRITE CD REVIEWS FOR EUGENE WEEKLY!

Reviews should be between 100 and 200 words, on any musical genre, and should be emailed to cal@eugeneweekly.com under the subject heading: "Local CD Review." Please include complete information about the CD, including band name, album name, year and record label, contact information so we can reach you, as well as a short bio about yourself. For additional guidelines and information, contact Ben at *Eugene Weekly*: 484-0519, Ext. 26



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