



Reeble Jar

STEVEN SAWADA

Reeble Jar

Jam is for sandwiches not music.

With due respect to the existing hippie jam bands already in town, the last thing Eugene needs is another hippie jam band. So as the name Reeble Jar slowly seeps into our collective vocabulary of hip local bands, dispel whatever images your Eugene brain may concoct of micro-brews in mason jars or something to put your pot in, and listen with an open mind.

Think of the bright '70s jazz compositions of Bob James; the musicianship and frenetic funk of musicians such as Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter or Jaco Pastorius. You will begin to hear a little Reeble Jar. Seven talented 20-somethings make up the band: Sean Ponder (guitar), Joey Hepner (bass), Adam Bushey (drums), James Green (saxophone), Josh Coffey (keyboards), Justus Williams on harmonica, and Tyler Spencer on didgeridoo.

So how does a jazz/funk band incorporate a didgeridoo and a harmonica and not sound like a hippie jam band? Simple. Williams wails on his harp like a young Stevie Wonder, not an old Neil Young. And Tyler Spencer can actually play the didgeridoo, showcasing a wide range of sounds and also enhancing the band's rhythm section. Forget the loud, misplaced didg yelps and farts you too often hear in local drum circles. The didg is a real instrument, with the potential to add a refreshing and unusual rhythmic depth to jazz and funk. "The didg and harmonica sound a little more raw and organic over the jazz groove," says Williams.

Reeble Jar has an "organic" Medeski Martin and Wood sound but that comparison is too simple. This is a band that can get the WOW Hall crowd on their feet dancing, or your Jo Federigo's crowd bobbing their heads and snapping their fingers.

First off, listening to a group that performs solely instrumentals can be a much more cerebral experience than listening to a band with a vocalist. You can internalize and

ponder Reeble Jar's brand of funk just as easily as you can feel it; your brain can separate and hear the intricacies of each instrument's part.

Syncopated drum, bass guitar, didgeridoo and keyboard rhythms throb and crescendo as Ponder's tight guitar licks and Green's dominant sax bursts add addicting melodies to this incredible wall of sound.

They build entire songs around a simple groove, sometimes improvising entire sections while creating a new song. They're so precise, you can almost visualize the mathematics behind their rhythms and melodies. "A lot of our best stuff has been improv stuff," Bushey explains. In true jazz style, each Reeble Jar member has the opportunity to showcase his own instrument with solos.

Through songs like "Mad Chicken," Coffey's fingers hammer at his keyboard like a drunken carpenter as he cycles through different junkyard-funk organ sounds. Williams summons so much soul and joy as he blasts on his harmonica, it sounds as if you're at a Southern church revival. And Bushey pummels his drums with such precision and flare, it's as if he has an atomic clock controlling each arm.

They're bad ... baaad meaning good. Reeble Jar lands a ton of shows for a band with no formally recorded material and they're in such high demand, they've been booked for shows they didn't even agree to play. "We can't help it when people fraudulently book us," Williams says.

Tuesday, Dec. 28 they'll perform with Garaj Mahal at the WOW Hall. Garaj Mahal is a hot item on the jam band circuit, having shared the stage with Bela Fleck, Karl Denson's Tiny Universe and String Cheese Incident. Their most recent album, *Mondo Garaj*, is also their first major studio record and showcases the band's ability to meld world rhythms with extended jazz-fusion jams and even a couple of DJs. **EW**

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