



Better Together

Music Alliance brings together Eugene's finest.

It wasn't a table for outsiders. Even the conversation was tight, the stories bouncing back and forth as rhythmically as a four count. A group of guys you wouldn't normally see together — a businessman, a quiet guitarist who lets loose on stage, a boisterous Southern-born black singer and an Italian sax player — hanging out in the cool darkness of the Countryside Tavern, having lunch and talking about the thing that brings them together, the one thing that's been a constant

for them throughout their lives: music.

Peter Giri, Paul Biondi and JC Rico are arguably three of Eugene's finest musicians. They've gigged with each other more times than any of them can remember and when they're together, they banter back and forth shooting ideas, stories and all-in-fun insults across the table like machine gun rounds.

"There's a language entertainers have that nobody understands but us," Rico said. "Normal people don't know what it's like to

be on the road in some raggedy-ass motel with the couple in the next room pounding the bed against the wall and cockroaches in the bathroom. When we're together, that language we have makes us laugh."

Along with half a dozen other local musicians, they form the nucleus of the **Music Alliance**, a loose-knit partnership between area musicians who play regular shows at The Countryside and Peabody's. Instead of competing with each other for gigs and publicity, they promote and play at each other's shows.

It started at Peabody's as a jam every Saturday night. Even with no promotion, the show brought in a larger audience every week until Saturdays were standing room only. "But there was no vision for it," Jay Alderson said. "And no promotion at all."

Alderson saw the potential for something bigger. "We were looking for a band that was a combination of all the great players in town," he said. "There hasn't been a blues, rock, gospel crossover in this town in decades and there is too much talent here for something big not to happen."

The idea for a collective of musicians working and playing together in a way that supports and benefits everyone involved is nothing new. Back in the '70s and early '80s Eugene had a musician's union complete

with dues and regular meetings. But the union eventually closed shop as the core blues/rock/gospel musicians moved away and the scene that had supported it disappeared.

Alderson, who worked with Bill Graham and watched him put the Doobie Brothers together, was willing to throw in some of his own money to get the musicians he wanted together on the same stage. As word spreads the crowds get bigger — Peabody's is

packed shoulder to shoulder on Saturdays and the Music Alliance added a Friday show at The Countryside in early 2005.

"When I came into it I had just been playing gigs on my own," Rico said. "But when you get this group together, well, that's a lot of power on that stage. I wouldn't miss that for anything."

With an onstage chemistry that's more explosion than slow simmer, the Music Alliance puts on a booty-shakin', jivin' thing that gets little old ladies out grooving on the dance floor next to swing dancing 30-some-things.

This Saturday's show (4/22) brings together some of the Music Alliance's top players including Rico, Biondi, Giri, Kenny Reed (drums), Byron Case (bass), Mo'Fessor (keyboards) and Blue (harmonica) for what promises to be quite a show. **EW**

The Music Alliance
Fridays @ The Countryside, 9 pm
565 Harlow Rd, Spfd.
Saturdays @ Peabody's, 9 pm

Sole Seeker

The War On Self Tour

Sole's got too much to say about the real stuff to waste his words on bullshit about bling and bitches. This is hip hop for smart people, with big four-syllable words and bigger concepts and ideas.

He calls his most recent release, *Live From Rome*, on Anticon "the first album I've done that's political," but that's not exactly accurate. Sole has been political since he was just a kid growing up in Portland, Maine and putting out records on vinyl with the money he earned flipping burgers at McDonald's.

What sets him so far apart is that he's humble and he's a seeker. On the phone, in person, in his music, everything is an exploration that starts with a question.

"I've got further to learn than I've got to say / Furthermore, I'm never taking a step for granted / Nevertheless, I'm at odds with the fact that I'm just one character on a stage / Oddly enough, designed to make it to the next page," he says in "Furthermore" off *Bottle of Humans*.

By his late teens/early 20s, he'd started traveling to New York regularly and the 1997 release of *Live Poets 12* led to collaboration with other up-and-coming artists including Doseone, Atmosphere and the Shapeshifters. His horizons got wider and his rap more political as he focused on societal paradigms, toppling each one like a house of cards with acerbic rhymes and wit.

Sole, Pedestrian, tel. jim jesus
The War On Self Tour
Monday, 3/25, 8 pm
WOW Hall, \$10adv/\$12 dos

"I've always had my beliefs and my ideas," he said, talking on the phone from some parking lot in New England on his way to New York City. "But I can't put something on a record unless I'm 100 percent solid on it. I'm not going to talk about Israel unless I understand the conflict. I just try to be careful when I'm pointing the finger that I think I'm right."

He doesn't read newspapers much any more, just books. The most recent was "some Marxist literary critique." And while Sole takes on the biggest issues facing us personally and globally, the sly humor and self-reflection in his songs keeps them from ever getting too dark.

"There's so many times I thought I should write a philosophy book or make a documentary," he said. "But those things take time and it would just be more generic leftist fucking fodder that no one reads. As a rapper in this field, there's a lot of space to say what I want. Because not many people are approaching it this way."

— Melissa Bearns



Dzogchen Dharma Center
Sunday, April 24 Schedule of Events

H.E. Dzogchen Khenpo Choga Rinpoche
will preside over the following events:
Grand Opening and Inauguration
of new Buddhist Dharma Center
time: this Sunday, 4/24, 10:00 am-1:00 pm

Dharma Teaching & Kalachakra Day Blessing
time: 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Events open to public & free of charge. Sponsored by the **Dzogchen Buddha Foundation** of Eugene.

Where: the **New Dzogchen Dharma Center**
2895 Oak St., Eugene 97405

for more info, call or see website
web: dzogchenlineage.org/dbf/

tel: 431-1066



SHAWN MULLINS
AND
BRANDI CARLILE

SATURDAY APRIL 30, 2005
CAFÉ PARADISO

SHOWTIME 8:00 PM * \$15 ADVANCE OR AT THE DOOR. TICKETS AVAILABLE AT CAFÉ PARADISO. FOR MORE INFO: 484-9933