



Short Stories, Renegade Songs

Tim Kasher brings *The Good Life* to Eugene.

Despite a brief residence in Portland awhile back, *The Good Life* (and *Cursive*) leader Tim Kasher hasn't been to Eugene since he was 10, when he visited a nearby relative. "I remember walking around a cute little downtown," he says. "And I had gone to the river to pick up crawdads."

That sounds about right.

This week's visit might be a little different for Kasher, who's headed to town with *The Good Life*. Kasher's last three releases — *Cursive's The Ugly Organ* and *The Good Life's Lovers Need Lawyers EP*, a collection of "renegade songs," and *Album of the Year* — have a mountain of glowing reviews between them; *The Ugly Organ* appeared on more than a few best-of lists at the end of 2003. Following jaunts through Europe and Japan, *The Good Life* are on the brink of a second U.S. tour for last fall's *Album of the Year*, the band's third album.

Album isn't exactly the self-aggrandizing title it might appear. Musically, it's a conscious shift to a stripped-down, acoustic guitar-based sound — a step away from the burbling synths, plinking keys, doubled vocals and electronic impulses of the band's previous album, *Black Out*, a remarkable, bipolar paean of self-analysis.

Lyricaly, *Album* is the story of a relationship, one year long, one song per month, laid out in the CD booklet as a small calendar. The year-long cycle was something Kasher had in mind for some time; he says *Cursive's Domestica* wanted

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to be this cycle, but it didn't work out. But he's not sure *Album* worked out either. "I thought I was writing this really linear, cohesive collection of music, but it came across to a lot of people as 12 vignettes, short stories with a similar subject. Some people got it. I wasn't accurate enough, or descriptive enough. But that's OK."

Both with *Cursive* and *The Good Life*, Kasher's songs spark an intensely personal reaction among listeners, a reaction due in part to his confessional but saccharine-free lyrics. It's strange, then, to be in a room where people are pumping their fists in the air without a shred of irony as Kasher yells, "Cut it out/ Your self-inflicted pain/ Is getting too routine," in *Cursive's "Art is Hard."*

"I think about that too much," he says. "I think about it enough that I bounce back and forth whether or not I want to keep playing and releasing music. It's a lot of internal conflict for me. I don't think it's wrong at all, it's just ... I don't know." Kasher pauses, and adds, "That's really a whole different article." **EW**

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