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MUSIC BY STEVEN SAWADA



Rocking Cinco de Mayo

Los Mex Pistols Del Norte come out shooting.

There is no better band in Eugene to celebrate Cinco de Mayo with than the Los Mex Pistols. But last Cinco de Mayo, Los Mex Pistols Del Norte were nowhere to be seen. All the way across the ocean in Singapore, the septet electrified a room full of hundreds with their explosive rock and traditional Latin music hybrid.

A Mex Pistols fan originally from Denver sought out the band to perform at his new microbrewery in Singapore, explains Bruce Hartnell, the leader of the band and a godfather to the Eugene punk scene. "I thought the guy was full of shit, I didn't know if I could believe it or not. So I sent these outrageous demands in the contract and everything and he came through."

Vibrant layers of horns, tuba, farfisa organ and accordion clash with twangy guitars, staccato snares and incessant crash cymbals.

Because Eugene is a college town, the rock scene tends to lack an institutional memory. Many band members and scenesters graduate and leave town. Los Mex Pistols Del Norte is a band that pops its head out of the ground about as often as the illusive groundhog. This leaves some to wonder, "Where are they now?" or the youngins asking, "Who dat?" However, the band, which has surfaced with several different lineups since 1995, has grown into more of a local, cultural institution these days than a traditional rock band.

Infusing the sounds of tejana, conjunto, ranchera and norteno music with elements

of paso dobles (celebratory music played at bullfights), Morricone instrumentals, along with punk and surf rock riffage, the band can navigate that borderland between rock and Latin, impressing the young and old with an uptempo, culturally rich sound. Vibrant layers of horns, tuba, farfisa organ and accordion clash with twangy guitars, staccato snares and incessant

crash cymbals.

"We've played bull fight songs and there's a mosh pit going on," Hartnell says. "In the same context, we can play that same music in exactly same way in the lobby of the Hult Center to a room of geriatric people and they think it's a high-cultural thing."

The group has also become more selective with the gigs over their years; partial-

ly due to the band members' conflicting schedules, and partially due to less visible gigs at larger county and cultural festivals. They are slated to perform at this year's state fair, as well as another large festival on the San Juan Islands. The Pistols will also return to Singapore for Oktoberfest.

"I try to play, not just at the same rock club over and over," Hartnell states.

Don't miss a chance to catch the Pistols this Cinco de Mayo at the Jungle. Their all-night-long performance will cover everything from norteno to '50s instrumentals.

EW

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