



Soldiers Come of Age

Hometown heroes ready to battle the world.

I remember, years ago, watching Marty Larson-Xu, Evan Seroffsky, Oliver Brown and their former guitarist Luc Gunn completely unleash on their instruments with pure fury and soul. I knew at that point (as did many fans back in the day) that the Soldiers were destined for greatness. Such rock 'n' roll greatness, I remember telling a friend, that I could already see their VH1 "Behind The Music" special with the drugs, the booze, the in-fighting, the model-dating, the break-ups and the reunions. No, it's not a jinx. I do hope the Soldiers avoid everything that threatens their success. But all

great bands, the ones with the greatest legacies, end up that way.

There were awkward moments during those first few years, when someone in the band lost time with someone else and songs just kind of flailed into an entropic anti-climax. But that was fine. It lent a rawness to the music: a forceful, cocksure energy.

Currently, the Soldiers are on the verge of blowing up as East West Records just re-released *The Two EPs* album (a collection of two Soldiers' EPs originally released on Gearhead Records), and Atlantic records pre-

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~ LARSON-XU ~

pares to unleash their major label debut *So Many Musicians to Kill*.

On a recent, blessed, sunny Eugene day, I talked with Larson-Xu over a pitcher of Pabst at the Horsehead. Although he's surrendered the military fatigues in favor of a new pair of Diesel jeans, the trademark bandana was still wrapped tightly around his forehead in true Hendrix fashion. Looking across the table, I realized that the pimply, quirky kid that I saw years ago kicking over flaming missile canisters at the EMU Amphitheater had matured into a confident, independent young man, hopefully prepared to take on the pressures of major label life.

When I asked him about how the band was dealing with all the attention over the last few years, he said they were excited, but weary at the same time about the public's perception of them. "I think every band to a certain extent has dreams of being a huge act," he said. "We want to get the music out to as many people as possible and be able to make a living playing music. But at the same time we want to keep our music credible. A lot of people don't understand that we've been around that long. They think 'cause all of a sudden there's this big explosion with Jet and the Hives that we're some band that just

cropped up in the last year or two."

But where the guys from the Strokes, probably the most popular of the '70s throwback rock bands, never bothered listening to Television as teenagers, or as adults in the prime of their career for that matter, the Soldiers not only listened to Richard Hell and Tom Verlaine, they took notes.

You can't get tired talking or reading about the Soldiers. Sure, they said some things in the infamous MTV News "You Hear It First" interview that reflected a cocky irreverence for their small-town start. But who hasn't, at one point or another, bitched about Eugene and its rock scene?

Besides, James Montgomery, the article's author, skewed the story just slightly, tailoring the Soldiers' image to fit the MTV "jaded teenage band" archetype. Montgomery made it sound like the band completely loathed Eugene. But Larson told me that the Soldiers will always consider this town home. "We have serious Eugene pride," he said.

MTV can mold our beloved Soldiers into some bubblegum rock band the pop music world knows how to digest. It doesn't matter. We know the Rock 'N' Roll Soldiers are the real deal.

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