

When the Hippo Talks, Minowa Listens

Minnesota band Cloud Cult creates epic CD.

Show me a band who wants to make a positive difference in the world and more than likely I'll hide under a rock, cover my ears and scream "No more hippie jam bands! No more hippie jam bands!"

But not so with **Cloud Cult**. The band records in a geothermally-powered studio, prints its CDs on recycled materials, donates 100 percent of its after-expenses profit to environmental charities and makes environmental information available at its shows.

Brad Minowa, Cloud Cult's mastermind, organic farmer and founder of the Earthology record label, wouldn't make music any other way. But Cloud Cult doesn't make the kind of "all one love let's jam together" schlock. Cloud Cult's brand-spankin' new CD, *Advice from the Hungry Hippopotamus*, has a little bit of everything. It would be entirely appropriate to call it epic, even, despite the dippy name. But what else would be expected from the band that Minnesota Music Awards nominated "2004 Artist of the Year" along with Prince and Paul Westerberg?

About the hippo — Minowa has said in interviews that when he moved to Duluth he began having dreams about hippos. So, like a totem animal, he allowed the hippo to live in the album art and imagery. In a

recent interview in the Twin Cities' *Pulse* Minowa spoke about his 2-year-old son Kaidin, who died unexpectedly in 2002. "On the last album (2004's *Aurora Borealis*) there was a big struggle in trying to understand where he went and why he left and the darkness involved with that and trying to just accept it," Minowa said. Now it's about "feeling him here and also taking that gift of his life and trying to make it as huge as possible."

Advice is the fifth Cloud Cult album in five years, topping out at 25 tracks in 64 minutes. Kaidin's death still reverberates through Minowa's music. You don't have to be a parent to understand the depth of pain Minowa experienced when he sings, "I bought a new shirt and I got new socks/But my skin's still made of memories," on "Start New."

Minowa pilfers Neil Young's "Into the Black," buzzes and screeches like Chemical Brothers and soars like Thom Yorke. He channels Isaac Brock alongside Doug Martsch and doesn't mind sounding silly when singing about the hippo. The CD's got some utterly beautiful fuzzy guitar, some lovely orchestral cello, viola and flute and many un-categorizable moments. You'll serve yourself well to check out this show, which features an onstage painter every night. **ew**



Cloud Cult
9pm, Thursday, 6/23
Sam Bond's, \$5
431-6603
www.sambonds.com



The High Dials

Pop Resurrection

Jangly riffs, sentimental lyrics and soaring melodies all describe the music of the **High Dials**. With a nod to all the appropriate (and great) players — The Zombies, The Byrds and The Pretty Things — the High Dials honor their musical influences with a sophisticated early '90s rock edge that brings newness and originality to classic, albeit forgotten, pop sounds.

So they're big in Canada. Possibly Japan? Who knows. Stateside, the High Dials haven't really thrown the switch that would illuminate the US pop-world. However, on the wake of the release of their solid, forthcoming album, *War of the Wakening Phantoms*, (which, by the way features amazing psychedelic/folk artwork a la those old '60s concert posters for the Fillmore), the group stands poised to really turn some heads. The Montreal-based five-piece was also the darling of this year's South By Southwest Music Conference in Austin, Texas, and were voted by the *New York Post* and *SPIN* magazine as one of the top ten "must see" bands at the event.

War of the Wakening Phantoms capitalizes on the group's ability to write memorable, cascading melodies. Every note captivates with vibrant emotion and melancholy, while at the same time refraining from being too corny or

wussy. You can sit and listen in introspection or leap from your seat and do the *Flashdance* run-in-place dance. Pre-released tracks from the album such as "The Holy Ground" and "Soul In Lust" virtually explode with crisp yet morose guitar hooks. Whereas songs like "Standhill Sands" reflect the group's fondness for a more subdued Brit-pop sound (in an almost shoegazing style) and more specifically, the music of Supergrass.

Craig Leve, the on-air host of KWVA campus radio's "Snap Crackle Pop" radio show, was among the first people to introduce the group to the West Coast public. Apparently the band loves playing in Eugene as next week's stop at the Downtown Lounge marks the High Dials' third appearance here, having previously played at the Black Forest and the Samurai Duck. *War of the Wakening Phantoms* drops stateside on July 12. The High Dials perform with Nude at 10 pm at the Downtown Lounge on Monday, 6/20. Free. — *Steve Sawada*

Future Man's Funky Rhythm

Roy "Future Man" Wooten knows rhythm. The percussionist for the three-time Grammy winning band Bela Fleck and the Flecktones has been drumming since he was a little kid. "I was probably 7 or 8 ... I just started beating up

boxes," he says. "The funk rhythms of today are the brothers of the blues rhythms of the past."

While the Flecktones take a year-long break, Wooten is touring with his "street maestro" Jeremiah Able on keyboard. Wooten says he's been "utilizing all kinds of music" in his solo work. His sound is certainly innovative, melding jazz with electronic music and more.

"I love music because ... it reveals yourself," he says. If you want to see this percussion master for yourself, Future Man plays at 9 pm at the WOW Hall on June 22. Tickets are \$13 in advance, \$16 at the doors. — *By Ursula Evans-Heritage*

The Cock Rockin' Makers

The traditional 10-year wedding anniversary gift is aluminum or tin. How special. But the modern upgrade is diamonds. Somewhere in between is what **The Makers**, who've actually been around since 1991, deserve for their 10th album in as many years, *Everybody Rise!* As their producer, Jack Endino, put it, the album is a "monster" that "rocks pretty hard."

That's an understatement. They put the

hardest track right at the beginning, just to get you in the mood. With distortion drenched guitars (two of them) that take the lead over the vocals on this particular track, "Matter of Degrees," they pound out this incredibly melodic, growly, power rock tune in exactly three minutes, leaving you amped and wanting more.

You won't be disappointed because they segue right into "Good As Gold" with its awesome, catchy chorus that's more dark Green Day than Stones meets Stooges, as they've been described.

With a new drummer, Aaron Saye, and Tim "Killingsworth" Maker returning to the fold after a some time away, this may be their best album yet, poppier than some of their earlier works but more polished than more recent releases like *Rock Star God* and *Strangest Parade*. Lead Singer Michael Maker can mimic Mick Jagger with uncanny perfection, which probably explains the comparisons to the Stones. But on the happy Beach Boys-sounding, boppy "Run With Me Tonight" he sounds more like Paul Westerberg might if you dropped him on a shiny, happy SoCal beach. And let's not forget "Ordinary Human Love" that sounds like The Backstreet Boys infiltrated this hard cock-rockin' band.

It's somewhat baffling how a band that started in the early '90s can STILL look like a five-person '80s power trio, complete with uniform black outfits and shaggy Joan Jet hair for boys. But they do. In a way, their bad fashion sense and refusal to embrace the current, indie rock "darker than thou" trend is refreshing. And they get extra points for dedicating the entire album to Buddy Holly. Plus, this show's going to be really, really, fun. The Makers play at 7 pm on June 22 at John Henry's, \$7.

— *Melissa Bearsns*

