



American Analog Set

Emo Lite

For a band from Texas, where everything big is king, **American Analog Set** plays music that's subtle, at times even small. Lucky for them, the indie-pop world isn't so obsessed with size. But it's not crowd size, or wallet size, or shoe size I'm talking about, it's emotional resonance. AmAnSet, as the band persists in calling itself, aims squarely at the emotional middle register.

The five very literate members of this 10-year-old outfit have grown accustomed to mining that Prozac-y area between highest joys and lowest sorrows. For this reason, the charm behind AmAnSet's music sometimes needs to be coaxed out of hiding by a patient listener. Their last album, *Promise of Love*, released in 2003, went over big, leading to a European tour with similarly understated Seattle foursome Death Cab For Cutie. So if you're into the subdued, post-grunge indie stuff, go see these guys at the WOW Hall. Have a few drinks, kick back, but please, leave the mood stabilizers at home; you won't need them where you're going.

American Analog Set plays with Yeltsin and Vervein at 9 pm Friday, Oct. 28 at the WOW Hall. \$8 adv/\$10 dos. —*Dave Constantin*

Pioneers of Period Performance

Performance of early and Baroque music often comes with a promise of historical authenticity, most ubiquitously the use of period instruments with strings made of non-synthetic material, no end pins on the cellos and other such timely details. While these details can add to the interest of the performance, the accuracy of the term "authentic" is somewhat suspect, at least according to **Andrew Manze**. The Baroque violinist and artistic director of the **English Concert** brings his 300-year-old gut-strung violin and some both controversial and fresh ideas about classical music performance to Beall Concert Hall on Oct. 30.

Manze's career has been distinguished by a deep scholarly interest in the historical details of the pieces he plays and a willingness to question what others in the classical world have decided to make of those details. This has

earned Manze positive and negative responses from both audiences and colleagues, which does not seem to concern him one bit. Manze has become a sought after conductor worldwide and has many successful recordings to his credit. His virtuosic violin playing is said to be skillfully controlled at times and bold and passionate at others; Manze says his improvisational flourishes were typical of 16th and 17th century classical performance.

Manze is somewhat of a rebel in the classical music world, yet his gracious wit in interviews and performances helps him avoid self-righteousness, particularly as his renown grows. His ability to blaze new paths while acknowledging the value of more conventional approaches makes him likeable both as a scholar and presenter of early and Baroque music.

Manze and the English Concert offer an intellectually intriguing approach to early and Baroque music that is mindful of the era in which the music was composed and the era in which it is now being performed. This Sunday's performance prominently features the music of Heinrich Biber, including the *Sonata Representativa*, in which instruments mimic the sounds of a nightingale, cuckoo, frog, hen, cock, cat and musketeer. A reconstructed Bach suite and other predominantly Baroque pieces will also be performed.

Andrew Manze and the English Concert play at 3 pm Sunday, Oct. 30 at Beall Concert Hall. \$12-\$29. —*Jacob Baker*

Discerning Ditties

The standard definition of indie rock usually doesn't include descriptions like "sea shanties," "ballads that include words with more syllables than arachnophobia" and "upbeat songs about the Civil War." But **The Decemberists** have an unusual ability to transform these descriptions into indie rock reality — and they're good at it.

The Decemberists' frontman Colin Meloy — who holds a degree in creative writing (which explains much of the sophisticated wordplay in the band's catalogue) and has lectured on Morrissey, writes songs filled with exotic intrigue and metaphorical quirkiness reminiscent of the intelligent yet foot-tappable music of Belle & Sebastian.

With an ensemble that includes the theremin, steel guitar and accordion along with the more standard rock instruments, the Decemberists put on a live show that can be enjoyed purely for the music — even if you don't understand what the hell Meloy is singing about (but seriously, you have to appreciate a songwriter who rhymes "civvies" with "dungarees"). And while it might seem strange to be at a rock show where the band's lyrics are about "chimbley" sweeps and gypsy lovers, it's almost guaranteed that you'll be singing along by the end of the show.

The Decemberists perform at 9 pm, Tuesday, Nov. 1 at the McDonald Theatre. \$15 adv/\$17 dos. —*Emily Freeman*

Crossing the Classical/Rock Divide

Ever since the Beatles garnished some of their tunes with string quartets and Baroque trumpets, classically trained musicians have tried to enforce shotgun weddings between classical and rock music. Despite conscientious attempts by rockers like Elvis Costello, Roger Waters, Joe Jackson and Paul McCartney, the

that uses the propulsive energy of rock rhythms and the melodic potential of classical strings to powerful effect, sort of like a slightly less jazzy Turtle Island String Quartet. TISQ and Kronos fans should definitely check out this fab foursome, which can cover an impressive range of moods and styles, including their sometimes bustling, sometimes haunting original compositions as well as covers like Bernard Herrmann's *Psycho* score and John Lennon's psychedelic classic "Tomorrow Never Knows."

Rachel's, based in Louisville, KY, similarly transgresses genre boundaries, drawing audiences from punks to classical types. Their audience-friendly music can be so atmospheric that it sometimes veers near ambient — but then it might suddenly unleash vigorous percussion, piano, or voice (live and sampled). Fans of classical, post-classical, art rock and anyone who likes sounds that cross borders between musical genres should turn out for what looks to be one of the most interesting concerts of the year. The sellout crowds for cellist Matt Haimovitz's shows at Sam Bond's a couple years back proved that classical types are willing to venture beyond the traditional "classical" venues.



The Decemberists

results have generally been disappointing. Still, art music types like Michael Daugherty, John Zorn, David Byrne, the Kronos Quartet and the late great Penguin Cafe Orchestra show that "chamber rock" can produce an original, compelling sound. On Nov. 3, the WOW Hall hosts two of today's most successful examples of classical-rock fusion: **Invert** and **Rachel's**.

Invert is a New York based string quartet (but with two cellos rather than dueling violins)

Just as the musicians of Invert and Rachel's are willing to take chances, admirers of thoughtful new music should support the WOW Hall's commendable effort to create a space outside the expensive, often stodgy concert venues for music that refuses to be pigeonholed, and that embraces the best aspects of old and new sounds.

Rachel's and Invert play at 9 pm Thursday, Nov. 3. \$10 adv/\$12 dos. —*Brett Campbell*

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