

Fans Turn On Their Golden Child

Maybe it's just my own predilections towards a traditional hip hop sound, but the new album from **Atmosphere**, *You Can't Imagine How Much Fun We're Having*, smokes anything being released by the insipid "dictionary rap" underground. I wouldn't group Atmosphere's sound together with the Sages and the Doseones of the world ... but they all together share the same audience thanks to clever marketing people who've been whispering "the next big thing" into the ears of impressionable college kids for some time now.

Digressions aside, the album has been met with mixed reviews – indie rap purists calling it too "poppy" (I knew the day would come when the hipsters would turn on their own); regular people hailing it as "dope." Besides Slug's cogently honest lyrics, Ant's tight production raises *You Can't Imagine How Much Fun We're Having* to a level beyond anything the group has done to date.

Some people claim that Ant stole a lot of his beats on this one, citing that "The Arrival" sounds like "Pangaea" by the Visionaries, or that "Little Man" sounds like "Who I Am" by the Diplomats. They're right. The songs are pretty much the same, using the same samples and bass lines. But if you're listening that intently ... let me rephrase that ... if you're getting your panties all bunched up over it, you should pick up the pocket protector and the slide rule and go back to doing mathematics the hard way because hip hop will continue to jack beats from everywhere. The album is superb. The show will blow you away.

Atmosphere plays 8 pm, Friday, Nov. 4 at the McDonald Theatre. \$16 adv/\$18 dos. – *Steven Sawada*

They Might Be... in Eugene

It's been seven years, but true **They Might Be Giants** (TMBG) fans feel like it was just yesterday. Seven years ago, one of TMBG's founding members, John Linnell, was named one of



People magazine's "Ten Most Beautiful People in the World" in an online poll. He beat out the likes of Sarah Michelle Gellar, Pamela Anderson and Prince to earn a ninth-place finish. Forget that TMBG fans stormed the site to vote for Linnell, and that Hank the Angry Drunken Dwarf of Howard Stern fame was named *the* most beautiful – this is an honor of legendary proportions.

Between beauty contests, Linnell and band mate John Flansburgh spend time making music. They've released a couple of kid's albums to commercial and critical success, and were revered as art-rock pioneers on college radio in the '90s. You can blame them for getting the television show themes of "The Daily Show" and "Malcolm in the Middle" (for which they won a Grammy) stuck in your head. And they were the inventors of Dial-a-Song, the seminal answering machine system of their songs that helped propel them to fame in the '80s.

The Two Johns, as they're sometimes called, have made a career out of drop-kicking genre-defining norms. They've sold more than 3 million records and have toured tirelessly for more than two decades, while never hesitating to take risks (making kids' albums) or to please their rabid fan base (releasing a 52-track Dial-a-Song compilation).

Dial-a-TMBG show 8 pm, Saturday Nov. 5 at Agate Hall on the UO campus. \$20. —*Tim O'Rourke*

Holy Harmonicas Fatman!

Everybody knows who **Blues Traveler** is, and those who don't will get no help from this article. But here's a story. I was in junior high in 1991 when the band released their quintessential album, *Travelers and Thieves*. I remember thinking it was some of the coolest shit I'd ever heard, and I fed off of it exclusively for months. To this day, that album is about the only thing I care to remember from junior high. So now, when I hear John Popper's pinched vibrato and inhuman harmonica riffs, I'm still impressed, but it triggers weird associations to an awkward time. But maybe that's just me.

Blues Traveler is still pumping out some great tunes and killing it onstage at major venues across the country. They're touring in support of their newest album, *Bastardos*, a perfectly competent product from a band that's been doing pretty much the same thing for the past couple decades. But if it ain't broke..., right? Get your tickets quick for the Eugene show. You might even get to hear something off *Travelers and Thieves*. But don't be surprised if it makes you feel a little awkward.

Blues Traveler is playing with Carbon Leaf, 8 pm, Saturday, Nov. 5 at the McDonald Theatre. \$22.50 adv. /\$25 dos. – *Dave Constantin*

Here They Come to Save the Day

The liner for **The Strange Tones'** latest album, *Crime-A-Billy*, depicts the band as a comic book, superhero foursome, complete with blueprints of their secret, hollowed-out mountain fortress. It doesn't hurt their case that the band members even sport superhero names like Guitar Julie, Suburban Slim, J.D. Huge and Andy Strange. To fans of rockabilly, this depiction isn't so incredible. Rockabilly's battered body has been held captive in Texas since the Stray Cats broke up. And it's high time somebody brought it back into the light.

But alas, The Strange Tones are no purists. *Crime-A-Billy* is more or less a blues album with a twist of billy, but it has a lot of the same giddy energy. The band combines the usual blues, country, rock and bluegrass feel into a tightly controlled, expertly delivered package. Even though it's not rockabilly in the *strictest* sense, that's OK. We'll take what we can get.

The Strange Tones play 9:30 pm, Saturday, Nov. 5 at Mac's at the Vets. \$4. – *Dave Constantin*

Aiken For Clay

While the mere mention of **Clay Aiken** may induce sniggers or looks of disgust from many a hipster, you have to admit that the guy has made a pretty huge success out of his fantastic voice. After coming in second place to Ruben Studdard (hey, whatever happened to *that* guy?) in 2003's *American Idol*, Aiken nicely bridged the gap between oh-so-hot-but-kind-of-nasty Justin Timberlake and oh-so-hot-but-maybe-too-intelligent-to-be-a-teen-pop-idol Josh Groban (he sings in *what* language?). Within seconds of accepting the silver medal, Aiken was selling records by the trillions. So *somebody* has to like him, right?

If the screaming, hysterical teenage girls who attend Aiken's performances and have watched his progress from *American Idol* through several record deals; whose mothers look on them with smiling approval and who secretly have adulterous crushes on the spiky-haired crooner – if these people are any indication of the type who have made his career so profitable, then prepare yourself, Eugene: The teenage invasion is coming. And their mothers are coming with them.

Clay Aiken performs at the Hult Center Saturday, Nov. 5, 7:30 pm. \$39.50 – \$69.50. – *Emily Freeman*

Answer to the Question

When it comes to writing somewhat interesting articles about music, the name of a band is a good place to start looking for ways to present a particular group's image. But the name of this band is just too easy: **Why?** No, this isn't a question. That's the name of the band. Question mark and all: Why? I don't know. It just is.

Before this turns into a regular who's on first routine, let's lay down a little about the band. Why? is a car crash of musicians hailing from California who don't make bones about telling it



like they think it is. The group utilizes guitar, pans, drums, trombone, violin, and keyboards (just to name a few) in creating beautiful and sometimes cryptic instrumentals to back vocals that aren't the most eloquent ("I'm fucking cold like a DQ Blizzard") but definitely get the point across. While singing about the music life, relationships and the like, Why? manages to put a new spin on the same old stuff with their melodic bluntness.

As for the name of the band, why Why? Because they're damn good, that's Why.

Why? plays with Aqueduct, 9 pm Wednesday Nov. 9, at WOW Hall \$7adv./\$8dos. – *Emily Freeman*

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