

John Shipe and The Blue Rebekahs



Shipe Shifting

John Shipe sees the creation of his newest album, *John Shipe and The Blue Rebekahs*, as the result of an assembly line that his songs rode through a number of creative influences. Over two years, these 13 songs (and countless others), were touched, manipulated and handled by a number of Shipe's musical contemporaries – in a good way.

"The nature of the project is slightly odd," Shipe says. "Most albums I've done are reflective of a single creative event. Even if it takes a long time it's still sort of a vision that happened at a certain place in time."

So Shipe wrote his songs, pitched them to his latest support group, The Blue Rebekahs, and waited for the next stage of song-construction to finish.

"This lineup has been really elemental in the sound of the music," he says. "When this group of guys play a song that I've written I get surprised at how different it is than what I heard in my head. Ninety percent of the time it's better."

The result, this time, is an album that falls mostly into a softer indie category but adds a jam band quality with its random horns and harmonicas. There's not really a continuous sound or theme throughout – a result of the somewhat freestyle composing process – but the songs are generally driven by Shipe's palpable, grindy voice.

One track that stands out is "American Wisdom," an angry, satiric message for the flashing lights of stardom in America. "We don't need your metric system/ Your fancy ideas we already dissed 'em/ Flavor for beers we drank and we pissed 'em/ We got our own American wisdom," Shipe sings.

That's not to say that Shipe buys wholly into the cliché that being an independent band is the only way to maintain a healthy dose of artistic freedom. But he recognizes the personal effort it has taken just to keep being a recording artist for over ten years.

"When you're not famous and you're not doing things on other people's money what gets called a music career is basically not much more than your willingness to do your job on a day to day basis," he says. "In a perfect world I would be 22 years old and forming a band with my other friends who are also 22 years old."

Shipe's wrong, though. Nobody cares what 22-year-olds think, so he's better off grinding it out with this group of talented, seasoned musicians. John Shipe and The Blue Rebekahs celebrate the release of their new CD at 9:30 pm Friday, Dec. 2 at Sam Bond's Garage. \$5. – *Danny Cross*

Three is a Magic Number

John Henry's is three years old and primed for new growth, with recent changes in both ownership and aesthetic. The popular downtown music venue and bar sprang to life in 1992 on 11th Avenue, feeding our stomachs, eyes and ears until St. Vincent de Paul razed the building in 2002. Gradual changes in ownership and personnel allowed brothers Keith and Mark Martin

to step up, overseeing the club's transition to 77 West Broadway and actively managing it ever since. Though they kept it quiet, in July the Martins concretized their hard work, buying out the club's other two owners.

"For my brother and I it is a priority to continually update, continually evolve," says Keith Martin. "From the beginning that was the thing about John Henry's. It started out as a punk club and then it kept broadening its appeal over the years."

The bros have repainted, purchased new furniture throughout the bar and updated the sound system. They added a back bar to the room and installed new lights. Additional locally-focused shows are on the menu, like the one-Saturday-a-month "The Baker's Ball" hosted by the DJs of KWVA 88.1 FM's "Locals Show." Greater booking freedom will draw more diverse acts, as well.

Anniversary festivities the weekend long kick off Friday with local acts **The Dead Americans**, **The Visible Men** and **Testface** along with SF's **Elephone** (who are, according to their myspace.com profile, influenced by "pillows and pills, books and nightmares"). Saturday night brings **I Can Lick Any Sonofabitch in the House** down from Portland, and they'll be singing tunes from their new album, *Menace*. Singer and songwriter Mike D. has found his sea legs with his most political and personal album yet, throwing verbal boulders at Pat Robertson and other fag haters, praising his late grandma and singing out for U.S. activist Rachel Corrie, run over by a bulldozer in Palestine. He shines a light on a friend's drug overdose, and reminds us that sex is a whole lot more than a handshake so don't just go doin' it with anybody. As always on Sundays, the "Classy As Fuck" **John Henry's Broadway Revue** kickstarts the work week with body talk.

While some folks still get misty-eyed over the old John Henry's, myself included, the new space has split its skin and is reborn

"It was a great place and I think we all miss it, but the new place has afforded us some opportunities we wouldn't have otherwise had," Keith says. Three cheers for three years!

The Dead Americans, The Visible Men, Elephone and Testface play at 10 pm Friday, Dec. 2. \$3. I Can Lick Any SOB In The House, The Sawyer Family and Black Mamba play at 9 pm Saturday, Dec. 3. Free; donations taken for charity. – *Vanessa Salvia*

A Dub for \$10? Nice Deal

When a group's first recordings are made exclusively around 9,000 feet in a tiny log cabin with no running water and their debut album

comes packaged with original artwork and a 64-page manifesto, you probably should be expecting something a tad unconventional.

It's safe to say **Heavyweight Dub Champion**, a dub hop group based in Colorado, embraces this eccentricity, both in their music and in their spiritual lives. Every sound you'll hear during live performances and on their debut album *Survival Guide for the End of Time* comes from the original compositions of over 50 instruments. They call their MCs "shamanistic sonic alchemists" and say that theirs "is a movement of inter-dimensional Warriors representing the Army of the Last Champion."

In case your childhood was all Big Wheels, Sea-Monkeys and unbridled fun, we'll tell you that "the Last Champion" was actually a supernatural entity that HDC founders Resurrector and Patch experienced on separate occasions, in separate cities and years, during childhood vomiting sprees and blackouts.

At 420 feet above sea level, Joe's Bar and Grill (complete with running water) is hosting Heavyweight Dub Champion (with Dr. Israel & the Dreadtones) at 9 pm Saturday, Dec. 3. \$10. – *Tim O'Rourke*

Alien Sounds

Teaching a fan of music to appreciate noise is like forcing a 4-year-old to appreciate spinach. Maybe 15 years down the road that kid will learn to like the leafy dark green vegetation. Maybe he won't. But if you keep pushing that stuff down his throat, chances are he'll learn to incorporate it into his diet. In the end, you have the vitamins and minerals you need to ensure healthy development into adulthood.

Translated to elucidate the work of the **Yellow Swans**: There are numerous technical elements that are employed to create traditional music. Entrenched in many of those elements are basic properties such as tone, volume and beat. If you can imagine an aural space where the complexities of

music (melody, rhythm, etc.) are broken down into such properties, which are then entropically transfigured, you can begin to corral the Yellow Swans' sound. It's like watching a visually stimulating movie with no plot – sometimes you can watch movies solely as a collection of images and scenes and still experience satisfaction and wonderment. In the case of the Yellow Swans, a desirable melody or funky rhythm is not necessary to appreciate their creations.

The formerly Portland-based duo, now hailing from the Bay Area, create many of their recorded and live work through an improvisational method. Realized through a fairly simple workstation, their music incorporates drum machines, guitar, treated vocals, effects processors and other various electronics – the duo uses fairly basic tools to create enormous, and greatly contemplative, walls of distortion and feedback. Sometimes layered over a steady rhythm, their works have often been compared to the industrial sounds of Coil or Throbbing Gristle. But being in a far more deconstructed state than anything those bands have produced, the Yellow Swans' brand of noise will perplex even the most die-hard fan of noise-rock.

Upon listening to the duo, your brain will cue in on certain obtrusive noises, then quickly leap onto something more rounded or familiar like a drum pattern, then from there attempt to dissect the mood or nature of an entire section. All the while, the sounds around your ears are constantly changing. However, if you challenge your ears to these alien noises, just as your palate was challenged at that tender age when your parents were choking you with veggies, your understanding of sound and music will change, enhancing your appreciation for the essentials. The Yellow Swans play with Axolotl, GOD and The Sounds Only Dogs Can Hear Orchestra at 7 pm Thursday, Dec. 8 at the EMU. Free. – *Steven Sawada*

For Music Lovers Only

Sometimes music is so good it transcends genres. As Louis Armstrong once said, "There's only two kinds of music, good and bad." While you might call **Drew Emmitt** bluegrass, what he does is simply create very, very good music. It doesn't matter if you love country, blues, rock, jazz, R&B, bluegrass or jam bands. If you love good music, you will love Drew Emmitt.

The former front man for the popular "poly-ethnic cajun slamgrass" band Leftover Salmon, Emmitt's lightening picking on mandolin is just one of his many talents. His sophomore release, *Across the Bridge*, is a return to his more traditional bluegrass that showcases his chops on fiddle, banjo, guitar and his incredible voice. With heavy doses of rock and R&B, it feels rootsy and has a hint of classic country that's as pure as red clay on a pair of cowboy boots. Songs like "Meet Me in the Morning" and "Big Ice" have a cheery, swinging grace with zippy melodies that retain their coherence despite the cascades of notes.

But it's on the slower pieces, including "All That You Dream," "Listen To the Spirit" and "Awakening," that Emmitt's rich, soulful voice really has room to expand and blow you away. On this tour he's performing with Garrison on bass, Billy Nershi (String Cheese Incident) on guitar and Chris Pandolfi on banjo.

This is some of the best music you'll hear in Eugene. Drew Emmitt plays 9 pm, Friday, Dec. 2 at the WOW Hall. – *Melissa Bears*

