



MICHAEL FRANTI & SPEARHEAD
8 pm Thu., Oct. 12
McDonald Theatre
\$25 adv., \$27 dos.

'The thing that I found when I was in war zones was that nobody wants to hear songs about war. They want to hear songs about connection to people, and songs about love and life, songs that make them dance.'

— Michael Franti

Spearheading the Revolution

Michael Franti and Spearhead return.

Michael Franti is certainly not the only musical artist to have toured a war zone, but he is among the few to do it without the support of the USO. Two years ago, Franti decided to put his action where his words were, so to speak, and traveled to Iraq, Israel and Palestine. Franti toured with his guitar and a video camera to experience firsthand the ravages of war.

Throughout his long career, first with Beatnigs, then Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy, Franti's music has been a soundtrack for disenfranchised youth. Through his street-level insight and sometimes incendiary commentary against poverty and injustice, his protest songs have created large swaths of righteous outrage.

Franti has moved further away from the

militant activism of his younger days, shining the warm light of peace on his protest songs instead. Franti's face-to-face view of Middle East violence and suffering resulted in his most upbeat songs yet: 14 new tracks on the album *Yell Fire!*, released in July. For the most part, the album stays blissfully in the realm of reggae — unsurprising, as it was partially recorded in Kingston, Jamaica.

When it does veer off the red, green and gold path, it heads to stadium rock land. The track "Light Up Ya Lighter" is an anthemic shout-out to soldiers. Over a bouncy beat that turns guitar-grungy, Franti sings, "Here's what you get, an M16 and a Kevlar vest. You might come home with one less leg but these things will surely keep a bullet out ya chest." "Tolerance" sounds unnervingly like a bad Lenny Kravitz ballad and is the only truly cheesy moment on an otherwise tight album. That's excepting the backing vocals by pop tart Pink on the slow and soulful "One Step Closer To You."

Franti's trip produced a companion DVD, *I Know I'm Not Alone*, featuring the voices of individuals living with the daily realities of violence. Showing real, on-the-ground war footage alongside Franti's guitar playing, the DVD is a powerful medium through which Western audiences can experience something they would never see on Fox News or CNN.

At press time, Franti was performing in Canberra, Australia, on his way to three dates in Japan. His first stateside audience upon his return will be right here in Eugene. In Franti's press release for *Yell Fire!* he discusses the new album, saying, "The thing that I found when I was in war zones was that nobody wants to hear songs about war. They want to hear songs about connection to people, and songs about love and life, songs that make them dance." He has accomplished this goal, and next Thursday's McDonald Theatre show should be a raging good time. **EW**



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