

TUESDAY TRIVIA NIGHT

"Name the two moons of Mars."

"The first 10 people to bring the correct answer to this question written on this ad will receive a free prize!"

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Retro Active

Of Montreal's full-grown pop music

For something so apparently simple, putting your finger on what pop music means in this day and age is oddly challenging. Clearly "Top 40" means something drastically different than what it once did. So what is pop music: the Beach Boys or Ashlee Simpson? Well crafted three-minute sing-alongs or pre-fab audio commercials for a celebrity's new vanity project? To most, the golden era of pop is the fertile decade of the 1960s, and rightly so, for at no other time in modern history have the boundaries of music expanded so much in so short a span of time.

All things move in cycles, and just as sky bound acid rock has gained renewed footing in the 2000s, the previous decade found a resurgence of fuzzy retro pop. The most imaginative group of the era was Elephant Six, a loose collective of bands that included Neutral Milk Hotel, Olivia Tremor Control and, of course, Of Montreal. In 1997, the quirky music community of Athens, Georgia, was rippling with electricity, and Of Montreal's mastermind, Kevin Barnes, was one of its principal live wires. From the onset, with the band's debut album, *Cherry Peel*, Barnes' machinations had already taken shape: an Anglophile pop

lover's wet dream brimming with quirky side tangents and Vaudevillian charm. A rush of releases followed, most with long-winded titles like *The Bird Who Continues to Eat the*

Rabbit's Flower and *Coquelicot Asleep in the Poppies: A Variety of Whimsical Verse*. Taking a nod from veteran storytellers like the Kinks, the albums were littered with character studies of

Volunteer Firemen and Unusual Nuns, but underneath it all, Barnes' often morbid fascinations always kept his music just shy of lightweight.

Well, time marches on, and with most Elephant Six acts going the way of the dodo, Of Montreal is one of the last bands standing. Their latest album, *Hissing Fauna, Are You the Destroyer?*, finds real life seeping in through the cracks of Barnes' technicolor diorama. Gone are the whimsical personalities that once inhabited his songs; in their stead are caustic reflections on lost love and isolation as the songwriter copes with long periods of depression and a recent separation from his wife and child. More power to him, though, because as our world grows more dark and complex by the day, maybe it's time for our pop music to grow up a little bit too. **EW**

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V **a** **i** **e** **n** **t** **i** **n** **e** **s**

S **w** **e** **e** **t** **L** **i** **f** **e**

chocolate dipped strawberries, fresh strawberry tart, fancy shortbread, love truffle, chocolate caramel shortbread, kekau chocolates, nipple of venus, love orbs, petits fours, makin' whoopie pie, berries and cream, chocolate orgasm, rhapsody

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