

Epic Soundtracks

Ratatat's road to victory

If you believe that beneath all of your 21st century sheen there's an ancient Viking oarsman ready to sail off into glorious battle, then New York's Ratatat might just be what it takes to make your warrior blood boil.

The twosome's perfect marriage of propulsive hip hop rhythms and soaring guitar lines boasts all the dramatic victory of a power metal anthem but with a decidedly more sophisticated flair. You might think a band with such a knack for tapping epic, emotional realms would have broken the process down to a science, but with Ratatat, it's just a matter of instinct.

"I'm not sure what makes one melody triumphant and another not," says bassist and beat master Evan Mast, "but you certainly know it when you hear it. For instance, no

one could listen to the 'The Final Countdown' and not sense the triumph."

A former Portland resident, Mast had already established himself in pre-Ratatat days as an electronic artist under the name E*vax, while his future collaborator, Mike Stroud, had been working as a guitar slinger for well-known acts like Dashboard Confessional and Ben Kweller.

"We met at school but didn't start making music together until a few years later though, when we were both living in New York," explains Mast. "I ran into Mike on the subway, and we decided to get together and make a song. We made this really over the top speed harpsichord song that was inspired by the 'Thong Song.' It was really funny, and we had such a good time with it, so we just kept going, making more stuff."



Ratatat,
120 Days,
Despot
9 pm Thursday,
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The hyperstylized focus of Ratatat's self-titled 2004 debut wet many a critic's whistle but also created such a distinct sound that the duo could have easily typecast themselves as one trick ponies. A listen to last year's follow up, *Classics*, instantly dispels such notions as the band explores dusty spaghetti western themes, subtle funk inflections and cordial acoustic breakdowns. Don't

expect the surprises to end here, though.

Mast says, "We have a few more months of touring to go, and then I think we'll get back to writing new stuff. We got very caught up in details on the last record, making sure every sound and part worked together perfectly. I'm not sure what direction the new songs will take, but I want to try something quick and sloppy and see where that goes." **EW**

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