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A RADIO WITH GUTS

The hosts of KWVA's "Baker's Ball" think – and act – locally BY AMANDA BURHOP

Like many looking to host a radio show on KWVA, Tony and Kirsten Jimenez initially took what they could get. Their original time slot was during the grueling hours of 4 am to 6 am on Tuesday — even night owls are asleep by this point. Hence their show's name: "The Baker's Ball." Because bakers — those who get up early so we can enjoy our morning bagels — were probably the only people awake and listening.

The couple moved from Colorado to Eugene about three years ago. Both played music and wanted a way to connect with other bands. To get in touch with the local music scene, they frequented the live shows of Yeltsin and On the First Day ... They Were Kittens. After a show, Tony and Kirsten approached the musicians to foster lines of communication. They took this idea a step further in June of 2004 when they started their radio show. In the early stages the pair played a mix of college radio and local artists, but after three shows they went totally local. "It's about the music and culture of the town," says Tony. And their goal was to expose underplayed local musicians.

Since the show's inception, Tony and Kirsten have moved to a cushy Saturday night time slot and had more than 78 live bands in the studio. Bands like the Happy Bastards, Genus Pro and The Fast Computers have all huddled in the studio, playing three feet from each other. It gets "hot and sweaty," Tony says. In addition to the radio show, the couple books a showcase once a month at John Henry's. In many cases, the band appears on the radio show for an off-the-cuff interview before heading to John Henry's to play. Tony and Kirsten say there are currently around 170 local bands, which can make competition fierce. Having bands in the studio and then playing a show is just one way the couple hopes to build cooperation and support in the music community.

"The Bakers Ball" features everything from hip hop to folk, but Tony and Kirsten won't name names when it comes to favorites. But they will admit that when it comes to the local music scene, they're "absolutely thrilled by it." They do wish that Eugene had more all-ages venues. Tony says that their long-term goal is to eventually open their own venue, but with the show, school and being a roadie, it's hard to find the time.

The couple plans to keep the radio show going for as long as it's necessary. They believe they cater to mostly musicians. "We love the people who do know us," says Tony. As for those who don't tune in or think radio has gone the way of the dinosaur, well, you're missing out on the best the Eugene music scene has to offer. Their initial and long-term goal is simple: "Get the scene going and perpetuate it." Now it's our turn to get behind the wheel and do as Tony and Kirsten say: "Support local!"

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