



Punch Drunk Shove

If you *still* haven't completely recovered from St. Patrick's Day, **Amadan** might be the band for you. No identity crisis here; the six members of Amadan distill fast and furious Irish-Gaelic punk rock with the explicit intention of whipping their audience into a frenzy as frothy as the head on a pint of Guinness. Their press photo kind of makes you feel like they might kick your ass; their music makes you feel like even if they did, it would be worth it and you probably did something to deserve it anyway.

It is difficult to say whether Amadan's instrumental fervor and unapologetically trashy nature do more to orient them as contemporary fusion artists or boost their credibility as genuine practitioners of fine Irish-Gaelic musicianship. Their latest album, *Pacifica*, stumbles along in the footsteps of its predecessors, *Sons of Liberty* (2002) and *Hell-Bent 4 Victory* (2004), all blending boot-stomping, whisky sloshing, reel-heavy pumpers with a few somber, more reflective melodies. And while *Pacifica* would be a fun album to listen to at a party, it is also worth a thoughtful listen, especially the opening jam, "The North Side," and the painfully colorful ballad "Used to Know."

Anyone with more than passing familiarity with Irish music is probably no stranger to the nameless, almost primordial emotions stirred by the poignant wail of a penny whistle. Longing, frustration,

abandon, rage, regret, exuberance, surrender; the Irish legacy is passionately complicated. True to its roots (be they biological or artistic), Amadan is capable of inspiring fans to rowdy excess, but it's far from being just a party band. Like that of influences Flogging Molly, Dropkick Murphys and most famously The Pogues, Amadan's musicianship evokes the tragically beautiful union of poetry, pride, identity and alcohol. Plus, if you don't go to their show, they might find you and hurt you.

Amadan plays with My Life in Black and White and The Dead Americans at 9 pm Saturday, April 14 at John Henry's. 21+ show. \$4. — *Adrienne van der Valk*

Travels with Cello

Alisa Weilerstein never sought the world of the music conservatory; instead, the 24-year-old cellist deliberately chose an Ivy League college and a tough major, Russian history. Maybe she needed a slight break from the world of performing that began when she was four, but she also felt completely supported in her musical life and wanted something "different." She comes from a musical family (her mother is a pianist and her father a violinist; they perform sometimes as the Weilerstein Trio) and split her high school time between what she calls "regular high school" and the Cleveland Institute of Music. But three years after graduating from Columbia University, she sports a musical career that must be the envy of any aspiring soloist.

This year, she made her New York Philharmonic debut by playing Edward Elgar's Cello Concerto under the baton of Zubin Mehta; in the high-pressure environment, critics wrote, she performed brilliantly. And she's constantly on tour, zipping from country to country and trying to relax by reading, running and burning up cell phone minutes like mad. She loves playing Prokofiev and Shostakovich, but with the **Eugene Symphony**, she's playing Haydn. Um ... Haydn? She laughs. "No, I play it all the time; I love the piece! It's just so joyful and really fun to put together." The piece is the *Cello Concerto No. 2*, and the audience should enjoy the music along with Weilerstein's lauded skill.

Though it's her first visit to TrackTown, Weilerstein, who calls Vancouver, British Columbia, one of her favorite cities, enjoys the Pacific Northwest and says she's happy to be playing in Eugene. Weilerstein hooked up with the symphony after working with music director and conductor Giancarlo Guerrero in Buenos Aires. "Giancarlo is great!" she says.

The Eugene Symphony's program makes the ebullient Weilerstein's piece look sedate: Arvo Pärt's *Fratres*, which exists in a daunting number of variations, and, in a contemporary swerve, the dream-inspired and cello-led *Harmonielehre* by John Adams. The Eugene Symphony plays at 8 pm Thursday, April 19 at the Hult Center. \$15-\$46. — *Suzi Steffen*

Listen Yonder

Is **Yonder Mountain String Band** abandoning its bluegrass roots? Yes, a little, although their press calls it "transitioning." So far, fans love the band's newest non-traditional approach to bluegrass.

Tom Rothrock, producer of Foo Fighters, Elliott Smith, Beck and James Blunt, produced the new record, a self-titled Vanguard Records release. In addition to being the first time the band has used a "rock" producer, this also marks the first time the band has added drums, courtesy of longtime Elvis Costello drummer Pete Thomas, to its standard lineup of banjo/bass/mandolin/guitar. It's also the first time the members wrote (almost) the entire album as a group. With so many "firsts," it's no wonder the band titled the album *Yonder Mountain String Band*, as if

it really were their first.

Rothrock wanted a tune with a spiritual feel, which resulted in "Midwest Gospel Radio." Adam Aijala electrifies his guitar in some places on the album and duels with a banjo on "How 'Bout You?" The track "Angel" is really more folk rock than bluegrass; the fiddle keeps it in the bluegrass camp, but overall, it's rock inspired. Ambient noise manifests on the album's closer, "Wind's On Fire." YMSB has always bridged the gap between traditional bluegrass and experimental ways of approaching acoustic music. With this album, the approach is less traditional than ever.

The band is in the midst of an extensive tour traversing the western states and has just announced that it will headline Red Rocks Labor Day weekend on September 2. Another announcement concerns throwing things at the band while during performances. It seems YMSB's members will absolutely not tolerate this new phenomenon taking place at some of their shows. Unless you want Yonder to wander offstage while here, Eugene, mind yer manners.

YMSB plays at 8 pm Wednesday, April 18 at the McDonald Theatre. \$20 adv., \$25 door. — *Vanessa Salvia*



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