



Califone, Eric Johnson
9 pm Thursday, 5/10
Sam Bond's Garage • \$12
21+ show

Tripped Out Blues, Spaced Out Folk

Califone and Eric Johnson in Eugene

On the website of Eric Johnson's beloved absurdist folk/pop group Fruit Bats, he promises always to continue the band, saying, "The only way Fruit Bats could ever stop is if I die." That's good news for Bats fans now that Johnson has officially joined The Shins. Johnson, who promises a new Fruit Bats record this year, opens for Califone on the band's Eugene stopover next week.

Califone's music is at its best when it's slow and weird. The group's new album, *Roots and Crowns*, is slow and weird. Experimental sounds, dark images, memories our unconscious sifts through, themes of rebirth ... it's all here. Califone's Tim Rutili and I exchanged emails about how the band approaches its tripped out blues, spaced out folk and shattered soliloquies.

Roots and Crowns utilizes sound from a piano covered in duct tape and paperclips. How do you know that's a sound you want?

We try to explore every weird idea we have. *Roots and Crowns* was recorded slowly and in a bunch of different places, so we had the luxury of taking our time and experimenting. Sometimes the friction of combining sounds that seem really unnatural with sounds that are organic (elements that shouldn't work together) open up a whole world of possibilities. Most of the Califone stuff we've done so far is built around that idea.

How do your album's themes emerge?

A lot of this music is about communicating with the parts of ourselves that are not so easily accessible or explainable. Some of it is not personal, and some of it really is about connecting with an intangible inner dialogue. If we try not to think too much about it or explain it away, we are much more productive, surprise ourselves and have a lot more fun doing this.

Comment on the album's title.

Accepting and integrating our past and our future, so we can be present. Maybe? That's what we were doing musically on this one. The title came from a book by Robertson Davies called *The Cornish Trilogy*. It seemed to fit this one.

You indicate that Heron King Blues was the end of a dark cycle and Roots and Crowns unites past themes, readying you for the next phase. What is the next phase?

I don't know yet. Just trying to deal with what's in front of my face today.

[Califone's equipment was burglarized during their last tour.] How did losing a lot of equipment affect the recording process?

It forced us to try a bunch of new tricks. I miss the stuff that we lost, but it turned out to be a good thing for making a new record. **EW**

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