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music

Yard Dogs Road Show



On the Road Again

In my mind the **Yard Dogs Road Show** is traveling to us by caravan. Dust Bowl-era wagons carrying weathered suitcases filled with ripped leggings, feather boas and snappy suspenders are guided by women dressed in dirty-hot, Wild West lingerie and surly men with long, slender moustaches that they twirl with their fingers. Of course, in my vision the traveling road show, bringing a showcase of cabaret, vaudeville and rock music, makes its way on foot along a dusty trail – that's just the inner *Carnivàle* fan in me talking. But in all likelihood, they probably drive minivans and only wear their costumes while onstage.

It's no matter how they get here, though, just so long as they do.

Part burlesque and vaudeville, this "Cabaret Blitz" is pure eye candy. Sword swallowers, fire eaters, burlesque and chorus-line dancers, accompanied by the Yard Dogs band, deliver a visual feast for the eyes. And to think the spectacle began as merely a three-piece jug band.

"We lead the modern hobohebian on a visual and sonic journey through part of history that may or may not have existed – followed by an ambitious return to the emotional challenges of our punch-drunk contemporary world," says their webpage. Led by professional misfits and thrill seekers, the Yard Dogs Road Show is a history lesson come to life. Forget Murder Mystery Trains where Billy the Kid robs the rich while onlookers eat a juicy steak dinner; Yard Dogs is here to overload your senses with 18th century visual stimuli.

Portland's Vagabond Opera will help in this endeavor. While only scheduled for shows in Eugene and Ashland, the six-piece band's blend of swing, tango and jazz is a perfect fit with the evening's bill.

So get out your best pair of pinstriped

pants or that corset you've never had an occasion to wear – everything goes at the Yard Dogs Road Show. Catch the show at 8 pm Wednesday, May 9 at the McDonald Theatre. \$15 adv., \$18 door. – *Amanda Burhop*

Honolulu Hot Rods

Writing about **The Hell Caminos** made me a little nervous. Could this band's music live up to their impossibly kick-ass name? Before I listened to their stuff, I conjured up a Frankensteinian hybrid of sound reflecting my fantasies about what a band called the "Hell Caminos" should sound like: Hank III's energy and recklessness, Hillstomp's creative genius, maybe a little ZZ Top thrown in there to cool things down and bring some cred to the automotive theme.

Then there's the fact that the band's from Hawaii. The product of a rockabilly germ transported to a non-native environment and set free to grow and multiply, isolated from its roots and natural enemies; what kind of beautiful monster might this twist of musical evolution produce?

Well, I was sort of close to the mark with the hybrid. I needed to have specified *both* sets of Hank's show (the country and the punk), swapped out ZZ Top for Elvis and thrown in some kitschy surf music band like the Ventures (but only if they were zombies or escaped mental patients). It turns out the island infusion transforms "psychobilly" into an experience at once nostalgic for the sounds of the '50s *and* firmly grounded in the bitter grit and grime of modern alt country/punk. They're James Dean on acid; they're the drunken tragedy after the sock-hop; they'll make you want to watch *Cry Baby* with your old X albums blaring in the background.

The Hell Caminos



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