



GIRL LAND

I first heard **MIRAH**'s music back in 2001. I remember it fondly. It was my first year in Eugene and the weather outside was cold and rainy, not like the snowy winters of Central Oregon that I was used to. Late at night, on my long drive back home, I'd play this strange, intoxicating CD. And I'd play it loud so that when the drums on "Cold, Cold Water" came in I'd be sure to feel them.

My whole life I harbored a deep yearning to be a singer-songwriter, but learning to play an instrument was, like, way too difficult and time consuming for my 20-year-old self. But when I heard Mirah's girlish voice, which by most standards is only considered mediocre, I felt like I could write and record music too. Her recordings were lo-fi gems in comparison to the overproduced schlock that I was used to hearing. Her record label, K Records, puts it nicely: "These albums were an exploration of the territories beyond lo-fi, aiming to transcend mere technical limitations and to push the boundaries of 'indie-rock' towards a more communicative goal." And that she has. Mirah is known for her natural interaction with audiences at her shows. She wants you to sing, dance and clap. I've only been to her shows twice and both times she played alone. While her voice and guitar can alone carry her songs, drums, keyboards and stringed instruments play an integral role in the mood of her intimate tunes. I'm glad to hear she's enlisted a backing band to give her songs a little extra oomph.

Mirah plays at 8 pm Friday, Sept. 7, at the McDonald Theatre. — *Amanda Burhop*



CLOSE ENOUGH TO TOUCH

Do you like Spoon? Bright Eyes? The Arcade Fire? Rilo Kiley? Maybe even Bruce Springsteen? If so, you might fall in love with **OKKERVIL RIVER**, the band of singer-songwriter Will Sheff and an assortment of friends (now set in a core group for the band's fourth album, *The Stage Names*). On the other hand, you might not like them at all; you might find yourself trying to figure out why, exactly, you hear something

missing from their layered, sometimes-anthem, sometimes-delicate songs, which land across the map of rock and beyond; why even though the combination of strings and what sounds like a glockenspiel in "Savannah Smile" is unbelievably pretty, it doesn't quite twang your heartstrings as you keep expecting it's going to with just the next chorus.

This is where I find myself, repeatedly, with Sheff's poetic, talented ensemble. I hear pieces of other bands I like, pieces of bands from previous eras that I can't quite put my finger on, but I still feel like I'm watching a scene through glass. It's so close! Sheff's almost-self-mocking tones, his ability to shift from a simple, chord-following melody into something unexpected and contrary, his impassioned lyrics ("What gives this mess some grace unless it's fiction?") — they're all stellar, all deserving of the mad praise the band earns with each release. But I haven't figure out the puzzle yet, I guess. Your chance to figure it out — and it's absolutely worth a try — comes at 9 pm Friday, Sept. 7, at the WOW Hall. — *Molly Templeton*

ONE HELL OF A CONGA LINE

In case you're looking for something other than a pleasant community gathering this weekend, perhaps you would be into participating in a "conga line straight to Hell," and we don't mean another meeting about the future of downtown: For those still reading, you may want to check out the



ment with the organ, trash percussion, drums and thrashing vocals to create live action entertainment that sounds like Steppenwolf in need of an exorcism.

Voodoo played for three years as a solo artist and has performed all over the country. He's also played with acts such as Th' Legendary Shack Shakers, Bob Log III, Captured! By Robots, Black Heart Procession, Jucifer and Hasil Adkins. After adding Robin Kennon to his house band, is he ready to give Eugene hell ... literally? You'll have to check it out to know for sure. Hey, maybe the conga line could even end up at Diablo's Downtown Lounge for a more appropriate ambience.

Voodoo Organist plays at 10 pm on Friday, September 7, at John Henry's. — *Katie Cornell*

HYPNOTICALLY BETTER THAN BAT GUANO

A long time ago, before I got my driver's license, the only music my mom would allow in the car was the local easy listening station. I quickly developed a healthy loathing for lite jazz, which increased tenfold when some would-be Kenny G tried to incorporate electric rock guitar into his lite jazz whale barf. It can be done, but rarely done well.

I later realized, after extensive self-education in the world of indie, that it's the same when you try to incorporate an unconventional instrument into a conventional (read: guitar-drums-bass) rock 'n' roll lineup. You must cater to the strengths of that instrument, and it must be a dominating musical presence. Otherwise, the fiddle/cello/oboe/tuba you thought would set you apart now seems gimmicky, and you run the risk of sounding like refried bat guano ... or worse, Yellowcard. Unfortunately, this has become all too common.

BRIGHT RED PAPER, however, is a great example of how, in a perfect universe, this fusion between two genres — 21st-century classical and, er, "rock" — should occur. It's a tasty puree of classical music's somber technicality and the engaging, youthful energy of straight-up rock 'n' roll. The cello, with its ominous, low tones, ties the whole Bright Red Paper package together. But while cellist Douglas Jenkins dominates,

guitar riffs and artful percussion by punk drummer Eben Dickinson add a shot of adrenalin to the cello's eerie, tense tone. Operatic, Tori-Amos-like vocals, courtesy of recent



addition Anna Byers, cast the whole thing in a surreal light. See this band, and I guarantee an occurrence of voluntary hypnosis.

Bright Red Paper performs at 10:30 pm Friday, Sept. 7, at Cozmic Pizza. — *Sara Brickner*



SHINY! AND HEADED TO THE TOP

If you missed the **SHINY TOY GUNS** show at the WOW Hall back in April, now is the time to redeem yourself. The band, which is quickly growing in popularity, is gracing Eugene once again with their presence at the Eugene Celebration.

As much as I would like to keep Shiny Toy Guns, one of my favorite bands, unknown and off of the airwaves, they seem to be an unstoppable force, destined for stardom. And I guess I would rather it be me unleashing the secrets of this band than someone else who might not do them justice.

If you go to the show, be prepared for greatness and a happy soul. Yes, that is cheesy, but listening to the sweet angelic voice of singer Carah Faye Charnow mixed with the powerful vocals of Chad Petree takes me to my happy place, and I don't want to ever leave. But I wasn't the only one that felt that way, as was apparent at their April show: The concert hall was packed with crazed dancers whooping their way through each set. I saw a few familiar faces, mostly local bartenders, who appeared to be in the same '80's bliss that I was: Among the synthesizers, the beautiful cover of Depeche Mode's "Stripped" and the band's perfected new wave style.

Sure, I could talk about how Shiny Toy Guns are touring with Yellowcard and Blue October starting in August, or the fact that they were recently on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, but I prefer to be in denial and think of them only as my best kept secret.

Shiny Toy Guns perform at 11 pm on Friday, Sept. 7, at the McDonald Theatre. — *Deanna Utela*

All of these shows are free with the EC wristband.