



Devon Sproule

Devon Sproule play at 8:30 pm Thursday, Oct. 25, at Luna. 21+ show. \$10. – *Amanda Burhop*

Mass. Invasion

Once again, I find myself writing about the joys and glories of the Massachusetts music scene. For Northampton, I suppose, it's the confluence of Smith, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, U-Mass and Amherst that creates smart singer-songwriters like **Chris Pureka** with lovely voices and intensely intelligent lyrical skills. And then there's Boston, where the coffeehouse scene in the 1990s was so competitive that people had to pay for the chance to sing a few of their songs; out of this scene came **Catie Curtis**. (If someone could explain to me why Portland's many music stages combined with the UO, PSU, UP, Reed, etc., don't produce the same mix of introspective yet political singers in the Willamette Valley, I'd be much obliged – I find it maddening. Maybe we need colder winters ...)

In any case, if you live on the East Coast, you can see both of these women fairly often; my friends in N.Y. and Northampton see them so often, and over so many years, that they don't understand how exciting it is when once or twice a year, Curtis arrives in the Northwest. Curtis' combination of compassion, audience interaction, accessible lyrics and a girl-next-door (OK, slightly smarter, somewhat gawky yet still sexy girl-next-door) sensibility charms the hell out of her fans. The album *Long Night Moon* includes the award-winning "People Look Around," co-written with Mark Erelli about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and sweet songs of love and learning about partnership and parenthood. And Chris Pureka, with her excellent newest album *Dryland*, can't help but be a lovely opener for Curtis. The pair from Massachusetts performs at 8 pm Friday, Oct. 26, at the WOW Hall. \$18 adv., \$20 door. – *Suzi Steffen*

Uke It Out

There are certain occurrences you can expect when someone you know returns from a trip to Hawai'i: One, your pal will be completely broke. Two, he'll brag about how he got leied. And three, he'll want to play you a song he learned on his souvenir ukulele.

The ukulele is synonymous with Hawai'ian luaus, but you might be surprised to know, as I was, that there are ukulele clubs all over the country: Bellingham, Seattle, Santa Cruz and even a couple – the Ukulanays and the Mele Ohana – here in Eugene. The attendance of these clubs is high, and they prove that it doesn't take a luau to enjoy playing or just lis-

Aesop Rock's 99-Octane Brain

Listening to experimental MC **Aesop Rock** sometimes reminds me of reading Virginia Woolf. Between the long sentences and tangents, understanding someone else's unchecked brain spew takes more energy than the average schmo wants to invest in leisure activities like reading or hip hop. Which doesn't mean that they're not both brilliant – it just explains why many people who say they love hip hop spend their free time listening to that repetitive Akon crap, and why many people who say they love to read don't ever finish anything but Nicholas Sparks novels.

The difference for me is that while deciphering Virginia Woolf's streaming consciousness for pleasure requires a level of discipline I don't possess, there's no need to understand Aesop's surreal poetry to enjoy his beats. The guy could get on stage and start rapid-firing "watermelon cantaloupe honeydew" at the crowd, and their hands would still be up in the air, waving to jazzy wind instruments mixed up with some synthy thing that sounds suspiciously like the background music to Columns (the Sega Genesis version of Tetris). Sometimes it gets weird, but it's never boring.

If you haven't done it yet, I recommend trying to decipher Aesop's earlier efforts. It's worth it. But his newest effort, *None Shall Pass*, finally brings a little organization into the jumbled brilliance of his rhymes. Solid beats and polished rhymes offer a clearer glimpse into Aesop's hyperspeed cranium than any of his previous efforts. Like the work of that iconic composer of fables who shares his name, this album incorporates more storytelling, and the organization required to achieve a narrative arc seems to have cleaned up Aesop's brain like an antique dealer unearthing sheet-sheathed treasures in a cluttered attic.

Aesop Rock performs with Rob Sonic, DJ Big Wiz, Black Moth Super Rainbow, DJ Signify and Blockhead at 9 pm Tuesday, Oct. 30, at the WOW Hall. \$16 adv., \$18 door. – *Sara Brickner*



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