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Alter Egos

Haimovitz, Escovedo in intimate settings

Matt Haimovitz leads a double life. From the time he was a teenager, some critics regarded the cello prodigy as the next Yo MaMa — er, Yo Yo Ma. Performances with some of the world's finest orchestras, major label recording contract, world tours ... he seemed set to be the Joshua Bell of the cello. But Haimovitz was also a late 20th century teenager, and that meant he listened to Led Zeppelin as well as Elgar and frequented rock clubs along with concert halls. He wanted to be more than just another star in the frozen-in-amber classical establishment. He went to college instead of conservatory, and then he started packing his cello and boxes of CDs in the trunk of his car and playing Bach in bars and clubs that had hitherto catered to folk and rock acts. His electrifying Bach show at a jammed-to-the-rafters Sam Bond's a few years ago remains one of my favorite musical memories — and one of Haimovitz's, too. He's made the club a regular stop on his subsequent tours, one featuring solo works by contemporary composers and another with his group Uccello, featuring some of his students at McGill University. (Since he still plays with major symphonies, I guess that means he now has a triple life: solo, orchestra, cello ensemble.) The audience for all these seemed split between classical regulars and other music lovers, with everyone cheering his Bach solo suites as heartily as his Zep and Hendrix covers. Even more than I admire his willingness to doff the tux and bring the classics out of the concert hall, I applaud Haimovitz's fervent commitment to contemporary music. Some of the more morose music on his new disk of new solo cello works won't be the instant crowd pleasers his Bach classics are, but experiencing the music of our time performed in such an intimate setting, microbrew in hand, somehow makes it more visceral, more approachable, more engaging, and there's no better advocate than Matt Haimovitz. His latest bar tour alights at Sam Bond's on Nov. 16; get there early if you want to see as well as hear him.

Alejandro Escovedo also leads multiple musical lives. In the 1980s and '90s, the Austin rocker explored the high-volume territory between alt country and hard rock in the terrific bands Rank and File, True Believers and Buick McKane. But when he managed to assemble the Alejandro Escovedo Orchestra, complete with string section, Austin music lovers like me would eschew even Stevie Ray Vaughan, Lucinda Williams, Lyle Lovett or any of the other local stars of the day to catch them. Shunning bloated Moody Blues-style orchestral pop, the ensemble augmented actual musical substance: Escovedo's searingly passionate songwriting and magnificent covers of the Stones, Iggy Pop and the Velvet Underground. In the world's pre-eminent musical town, Escovedo occupied the pinnacle, and national acclaim soon followed. But his career suffered from some of the real life tragedies that fueled those unforgettable songs, such as his ex-wife's suicide and a



near-deadly struggle with hepatitis that sidelined him for years. Happily, with support from fans and admirers (including John Cale, Steve Earle and others who contributed to a tribute album), Escovedo really did find a second, healthier life; his 2005 show at the Shedd, with an encore played from the audience, was one of the most moving I've ever seen there. And now he, too, returns in a third incarnation: an acoustic duo with guitarist David Pulkingham on Nov. 14 at the Shedd, which should enable us to hear even more clearly Escovedo's poignant songcraft.

That's one of several attractive Shedd shows. On Nov. 9, it hosts promising young jazz singer **Sara Gazarek**, who's won adulatory national reviews for her covers of both midcentury standards as well as rock-era songs by the likes of Joni Mitchell and Paul McCartney. At the other end of the chronological spectrum, the Shedd hosts blues-rock pioneer **John Mayall** on Nov. 15. His Bluesbreakers helped launch Brit rock legends from Clapton to Fleetwood Mac, and Mayall's new CD tribute to the great Freddie King shows he can still deliver fully charged electric blues. And on Nov. 13, mandolin master **Mike Marshall** (a mainstay of David Grisman and Darol Anger's great bands) brings his newest passion, breezy Brazilian Choro music, in a show highly recommended to fans of jazz, bluegrass, and world music.

You could spend the rest of this month at the UO's Beall Hall and hear some superb music. On Nov. 15, violinist **Gerald Elias** and pianist **Marjorie Janove** play music by Mozart, Dvorak, the great 20th century composer Toru Takemitsu and the UO's own David Crumb and Robert Kyr. The ever-inventive **Oregon Percussion Ensemble** performs on the 17th, while on the 19th, UO jazz faculty members led by saxophonist **Idit Shner** play arrangements of some of the Israeli songs she heard growing up in that country. Jazz fans should also check out two fine bands at Luna: the excellent Eugene fusion band **Vega** on Nov. 10 and the **Chad McCullough Group**, composed of hot young Northwest musicians led by the Seattle composer/trumpeter and featuring recent UO grad Ben Darwish on piano, this Thursday, Nov. 8. **ew**

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