

The Oregon Humanities Center presents the
2007–8 Colin Ruagh Thomas O'Fallon
Memorial Lecture in Art and American Culture

Art and Storytelling in the Age of Media Convergence

Henry Jenkins



7:30 p.m. • Wednesday • January 16, 2008
182 Lillis • 955 E. 13th Avenue
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music

Sound Smorgasbord

At first listen, **Sofia** and **JT and the Clouds** seem like strange billfellows. One is a dreamy, folksy duo; two women who play with their voices as freely as they do the poetry they set to music. The second is a soul-saturated, percussive powerhouse with harmonies that evoke old doo-wop but are somehow distinctly modern. But while their styles may be different, each band is blending genres, instruments and vocal stylings in a manner that reaches way beyond "experimentation." Both bands have a mature, confident flavor distinct to musicians who aren't just coming up with material but are in fact realizing deliberate audio creations.



Canadian lasses Allison Russell and Awna Teixeira of Sofia have an extensive performance and touring history under their belts and recently released their first full-length album, *No Shame*. Far from the acoustic-guitar toting stereotype of the singer-songwriters of the past, Sofia's members adorn their songs with clarinet, accordion, ukulele, washboard, whistle, harmonica and banjo (to name a few), bringing an old-world, jazzy flavor to the gorgeous melodies, heartbreaking lyrics and harmonies that quiver with emotion. The band will no doubt be compared favorably to fellow maple leafs The Be Good Tanyas, but the intensely personal nature of Sofia's songs move them into a category that deserves more than just a "sounds like" description, as the duo takes both vocal and emotional risks that pay off big time for their audiences.

Critical darlings out of Chicago, JT and the Clouds are really tough to categorize, and they like it that way. Their latest album *the city's hot yeah the city's hot* features track after track that contain a century of musical influence, yet don't sound muddy or rehashed. The lead vocals (courtesy of "JT" Lindsay) can be appealingly and deliberately campy, yet change from louny to intimate in a split second, buoyed by energetic backing harmonies, bass and horns. So yeah, I guess you could say they are pretty much a soul band, but expect to hear some swing, blues, folk and indie rock in there too. Create your own category if you must; JT and the Clouds will just bust it wide open with their next album.

Sofia and JT and the Clouds are old touring buddies and likely to put on a show that is both soothingly polished and spontaneously energetic. Something for everyone who likes music from the horizon. Sofia and JT and the Clouds play at 8:30 pm Sunday, Jan. 13, at Sam Bond's Garage. 21+ show. \$6-\$10. – *Adrienne van der Valk*



Je Ne Sais Quoi

A world traveler himself, **Eric John Kaiser** makes the kind of laid back, acoustic-based music that innocuously drifts through hostels and smoky hookah bars the world over. He's a folk troubadour for the backpacking set and he infuses his folk-rock-and-sometimes-funk sound with a little bit of Wyclef Jean, a little Manu Chao and a whole lot of Jack Johnson. But what separates Kaiser from most mellowed-out island minstrels is that he sings his bubbly songs in French.

As an expatriate in Paris, Kaiser performed more than 300 concerts and recorded three EPs with his former band, Melt. He also played with the French artist Katherine while residing in France. He

recorded his first solo album, *L'ODYssée*, in July 2006 in Paris with fellow French musicians, including Feniksi from the hip-hop group Saïan Supa Crew, and he has since played concerts in Australia, Hong Kong, Saint Croix and the Pacific Northwest. Kaiser now lives in Portland, where he has performed more than 100 concerts and become a staple of the Northwest coffee-house and college scene. His smooth French accent is like a fine champagne in a world of java and joe, and his tropical, acoustic shuffles are a nice shot of sun in an otherwise somber climate. Sit down, close your eyes and you'll feel like you're being serenaded on a beach in France. Eric John Kaiser plays at 7 pm Thursday, Jan. 17, at Cozmic Pizza. \$5. – *Jeremy Ohmes*

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