



Suckered and Satisfied

I must admit I have a bit of a soft spot for being sucker punched, and **Ms. Led's** third album, *Shake Yourself Awake*, is like a cheap shot to the back of the head. It sort of stuns you at first, but there really is no long-term damage in the end – and I kind of like that. The proto-feminist post-punk rawkus that the Seattle group revs up and races is certainly nothing new, but for some reason their dirty licks and grimy hooks drive themselves straight into your frontal lobe and peel out before you even know what hit you.

Like Sleater-Kinney or their foremothers, Slant 6, Ms. Led adopts the voice of bad conscience and strips away its brattiness, exposing a playful petulance that's chewed up and spat out by singer/songwriter/guitarist Lesli Wood. Lines like, "I have never been so unafraid / I have never been so relatively blind / I have never felt so cool and calculating / I am living in a terrible lie" announce themselves as all sardonic slap. But after a few listens it sounds more like Ms. Led accosts rock 'n' roll's machismo, takes it home and makes off with its money in the morning. On "New Agenda," the band takes a page from the Gossip, cutting up the tune with Peg Wood's caustic guitar and a swagger just shy of scandalous. *Shake Yourself Awake* is just whistling at rock 'n' roll on the side of the road. It's rock 'n' roll objectified. It's rock 'n' roll taken at face value when it's easy to hear, and if you never get beyond its face value, you can still come away satisfied. Now that I think about it, *Shake Yourself Awake* is less a cheap shot to the back of the head than a swift kick to the balls. Ms. Led plays the

Emerald City Roller Girls Fundraiser with the Velvet Trap and the Ovulators at 10 pm Saturday, May 3, at Downtown Lounge. 21+ show. \$6. – *Jeremy Ohmes*

Musical Solitude

Boston's **Patty Larkin** is considered a musician's musician. She's revered for her unique guitar playing style, onstage persona and creative approach to playing and writing music.

A descendent of Irish-American singers and tale tellers, Larkin has spent her lifetime around music. She dove into the piano and guitar during her youth and then focused on writing while in college. Now an established musician and favorite among critics, Larkin has a strong foothold in the world of alt-folk music. Her latest album, *Watch the Sky*, was produced, engineered and edited by Larkin herself. In addition

to providing all the tracks, she improvised and conceived of song ideas as she went. "I've always been a writer who enjoyed the solitude of the creative process," Larkin says on her website.

But while she revels in her isolated writing process, I can't help but think she might have been helped by a second opinion. Some songs use a synthetic drum beat, which I normally like in electropop songs, but they feel out of place in her contemporary folk world. Experimentation within one's genre is important, but when it distracts the listener – as these drum beats do – it becomes a listening hindrance. When Larkin relies on her earthy, natural vocals and guitar variations to guide a song, it shines.

Her music conjures comparisons with k.d. lang, Tori Amos and Alanis Morissette in small ways. Nothing is overt, and subtlety is everything. It might be a turn of a phrase, a breathy note or rushed lyric that draws these comparisons, but she'll make you work to find them.

Larkin is a born performer, and her connection with the audience is undeniable. Her approach to guitar playing is also worth seeing. Watch her play the "slap steel" guitar, a detuned lap steel Larkin plays with a drumstick and her hand. Patty Larkin and Peter Mulvey play at 8 pm Thursday, May 1, at the WOW Hall. \$20 adv., \$23 door. – *Amanda Burhop*

Dark Star Shining

When was your first Dead show? Mine was July 16, 1990, in Orchard Park, N.Y.

I was living in Pennsylvania, fairly recently out of high school and renting a room in a houseful of Deadheads. My musical tastes centered around Metallica and the Misfits, but these hippies let me move in anyway. It wasn't long before their carefree lifestyles



Straight From the Tap

We all know the stereotype about the Irish and their love for alcohol. But what about their love for hip hop? Now, I know what you're thinking, and no, House of Pain isn't coming to town, but **Mac Lethal** is. The self-described "Irish pothead" is touring with material from his most recent effort, *11:11*.

Mac Lethal, aka David McCleary Sheldon started turning heads in 2002 after winning the Scribble Jam freestyle contest and releasing his first album, *Men Are From Mars, Porn Stars Are From Earth*. While performing with lyricists like Atmosphere, Sage Francis and P.O.S., Lethal was named one of *Urb Magazine's* Next 100 and eventually inked a deal with Rhymesayers Entertainment in 2003. Since then the rapper has co-founded his own label, Black Clover Records, which released *11:11* in 2007.

The album, largely produced by Michael "Sleep" Summers, delivers Lethal's grumpy lyrics from the edge of a bar stool as he fires off his everyman convictions on technology, mainstream hip hop, pounding beers and the joy of making out with strangers. Absurd, honest and rough around the edges, Lethal's content is made easier to swallow by the often careful construction of his narratives. "I'm from the meth lab city of broken dreams and cracked out dopamines where everybody's looking for an ocean scene." Although the refreshing lack of Rovers and chains probably won't land Mac Lethal on Rap City anytime soon, don't be surprised if you catch him throwing back a few at your local pub. Mac Lethal plays with Grieves, Approach and DJ Sku at 9 pm Friday, May 2, at the WOW Hall. \$10 adv., \$12 door. – *Zach Klassen*



MOHAWK

Pub & Spirits

★ **THIS FRIDAY! LATAGO**
MUSIC BEGINS AT 9PM • NO COVER

★ **TONIGHT! LADIES NIGHT 9pm-2am**
Drink Specials & DJ Slick Nick

★ **KARAOKE EVERY SATURDAY 9pm-2am**
With KJ Host - Jarrod

★ **EVERY SUNDAY AND MONDAY** Come Play Nintendo Wii

Come See What's New!

1501 Mohawk Blvd. - Springfield - 747-3211

The City!

EUGENE'S PLACE

To Party!

DJ REDD FOX
EVERY TUES
& SAT NIGHTS

DJ SIMY
EVERY THURS
& FRI NIGHTS

The CITY NIGHTCLUB

myspace.com/thecityeugenecityclub
www.thecityeugene.com

2222 MLK In The Kowloon Building

343-4734