



The Blow

MELISSA DYNE

Don't Blow It

The trajectory of Khaela Maricich's career began with a woman onstage with nothing but a ukulele and her witty observations (as the solo act Get The Hell Out of the Way of the Volcano), morphed into a woman onstage acting like a teenager questioning her devotion to her boyfriend (as a performance artist) and has recently become a woman onstage singing her lyrics karaoke-style (**The Blow**) to electro-blips and beats arranged by Jona Bechtolt (of YACHT). In that time, Maricich moved from Olympia, Wash., to Portland and became quite involved in social causes.

Maricich's live shows are still as intimate as the girl-with-a-ukulele thing; that is, still fragile enough that it takes a few songs before the slight embarrassment you feel for her lonely stage presence melts away and The Blow's bittersweet bubblegum electro-pop gets you moving. The Blow is still touring on 2006's guilty pleasure, *Paper Television*, a collection of oddly affecting torch songs about melancholy in the deli aisle ("Parantheses"), stealing a hetero woman away from her underperforming boyfriend for hot lesbian sex ("Bonjour Jeune Fille") and the lovelorn cry of a turd ("Babay"). And now that Bechtolt is out of the picture, Ms. Maricich, I'd like to make a suggestion: Make a record with Jimmy Tamborello (of Postal Service). I can already hear the ka-ching!

Opening for The Blow is **Point Juncture, WA**, a dreampop outfit that's so far floated under the radar, playing mostly Portland's house concert circuit while occasionally appearing as the house band for the now-defunct cocktail lounge Nocturnal. PJWA's sound can get horny, snare-drummy, literary and outright jammy, but always sticks with a smoky, sexy flair – making their self-described comparison Yo La Tengo reasonably justified.

The Blow and Point Juncture, WA play at 9 pm Friday, June 13, at WOW Hall. \$10 adv., \$12 door. – *Chuck Adams*

I Just Can't Wait to be King

"I deserve to conquer the universe, and goddammit, so do you," says the piano-creep-pop singer-songwriter Rachel Taylor Brown of her new album, *Half Hours with the Lower Creatures*. The name of the album came from a 1918 marine biology

textbook the Portlander picked up at a bookstore. It's the perfect title for an album composed of songs dealing with the age-old human desire to be king, to rule the world.

Brown's piano-driven ballads tell stories. Track five on the album, "Abraham and Isaac," tells the story of a father who agrees to kill his son because God tells him to. Brown brings humor to these dramatic situations with lyrics such as, "Did Abraham say anything / To Isaac, like, 'I'm killing you today / Better bring a coat / It looks like rain.'" This wit, and almost satire, shines through in the title of her songs as well. The eighth track on *Half Hours with the Lower Creatures* is cleverly titled "B.S. (Beautiful Savior)" and is a tale about child soldiers being sacrificed and the U.S.'s faltering attempt to be the world's leader. Brown is accompanied by a band that includes a guitarist, bassist, drummer and violist. Each member of the band also contributes to the vocals, creating a powerful, full sound.

Rachel Taylor Brown plays at 10 pm Thursday, June 12, at the Black Forest. 21+ show. Free. – *Katrina Nattress*

Circa 1930

Reverend Peyton's Big Damn Band is the epitome of roots/blues. If people from the 1930s happened to stumble upon a time machine and transport themselves into a Big Damn Band concert, they'd probably think something had gone wrong, that they



had not traveled into the future at all.

This trio does not play what you may consider the standard instruments of a three-piece (i.e. guitar, bass, drums). Sure, there are drums, and there is a guitar, sort of. But it's not your typical guitar. No, the Rev. Peyton does not play a Fender Tele. He plays a '30s era Dobro, or National, guitar – a resonator guitar built with a wooden body and a single aluminum cone and played Spanish style, usually with a slide. Toss the bass completely and replace it with a washboard. The Big Damn Band further authenticates its early 20th century sound by recording its newest album, *Big Damn Nation*, live to tape with no overdub.

This lo-fi sound is what makes Reverend Peyton's Big Damn Band so damn intriguing. The music has a steady beat with the Rev. Peyton's shaky, muddled lyrics mumbled on top (I seriously cannot understand a single word he says).

If you want to know what attending a concert was like in the 1930s, check out this jivin' threesome. Reverend Peyton's Big Damn Band plays at 8 pm Wednesday, June 18, at John Henry's. \$8 adv., \$10 door. – *Katrina Nattress*

Brit Lit

English majors, adjust your glasses, secure your scarves and triumphantly raise your dog-eared copies of *Mrs. Dalloway*; you have a new favorite band – **Princeton**. Comprised of twin brothers Jesse and Matt Kivel and childhood friend/drummer Ben Usen, the Los Angeles-based trio not only has a name to put any ex-Ivy League hopeful in a twitter, but they possess the literary chops to back it up.

On their new *Bloomsbury* EP, Princeton composes four paeans to the influential Bloomsbury Group, an intellectual collective that lived in early 20th century London and counted among its members Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey and Leonard Woolf. Each song is a sweet-and-sly essay of shiny bedroom pop with a works cited that could include Jens Lekman, Belle & Sebastian and the Magnetic Fields. On "The Waves," one of the twins coyly sings about Virginia Woolf over a bouncing piano line for one verse and shimmering strings and flutes the next, then ties it all together with a myriad of instruments found in any first-

grade homeroom. On "Leonard Woolf," the singer tells the not-so-well-known husband of Virginia not to cry: "Your books will one day speak to me / And when they do we'll run outside / And tell your wife ... And tell your wife." Now does that send you back to Brit Lit 101, or what? Princeton plays at 10 pm Wednesday, June 18, at Luckey's. 21+ show. \$3. – *Jeremy Ohmes*

Southern Comfort

If the rain in June has got you down, then take a listen to **Railroad Earth** and you'll be transported to a swinging porch chair with the sun on your face and a drink in your hand. The first song on the group's new CD, *Amen Corner*, sings like a true country tune, but as soon as the track changes, so does the sound. This is the band's first studio album in four years and was recorded at band member Todd



Sheaffer's 300-year-old farmhouse in the New Jersey countryside. "Hard Livin'" proves that Railroad Earth have more soul than your average country bumpkins even though they aren't from the South at all (as hard as that is to believe). As the disc progresses, the band will have you tapping your feet like you're at the local annual barn dance, but two songs later you're right back to the soul.

Since their birth in 2001, the band has come to focus more on family, and recording at home was a welcomed decision. Such changes can be seen in the song "L'il Bit O' Me," which reflects the experience of becoming a parent with lyrics like, "O little baby what do I see / A little bit of you and a little bit of me." But it's not just all lovey-dovey stuff. The album is also broken up with purely instrumental tracks that are a nice addition to the disc and bring the band to new depths. Railroad Earth and Greensky Bluegrass play at 8 pm Thursday, June 19, at the McDonald Theatre. \$18 adv., \$20 door. – *Megan Udow*