



**Mood Area 52,
Devil Don't Wait,
Steven Weeks**
9:30 pm Saturday, July 19
Sam Bond's Garage • \$5
21+ show

Not Your Grandma's Tango

Worlds collide on Mood Area 52's new CD

Three years ago, Michael Roderick was traveling around Argentina when he decided to do a little shameless self-promotion. He walked around to different radio stations in Buenos Aires, handing out CDs and trying to get his Argentine-influenced music actually played on Argentine radio. With an easygoing smile that stretches out under his straw hat, he laughs as he says, "The radio people didn't understand. They thought it was strange that someone from Oregon was playing tango music." And who could blame them? Oregon isn't really known as a hotbed of tango culture, but for the last 10 years, Roderick and his accordion-led ensemble, Mood Area 52, have been bringing the slow dotted duple rhythms of Buenos Aires to the Beaver State.

Roderick's take on tango isn't what most ballroom tango purists or *Dancing with the Stars* fans would expect, though. Usually accompanied by cellist Amy Danziger and the occasional full band, the singer/songwriter/self-taught instrumentalist approaches the music from a worldlier, anything-goes mindset, alloying the Argentine sounds with klezmer, lounge, electronica, chanson, cabaret and a strong dose of Tom Waits. On Mood Area 52's two new CDs, *First in Line to Get Stuck with a Pin* and *Remember This Dream*, you might hear a spooky Eastern European, Stephen Sondheim-esque black operetta one minute and an anachronistic South American tangofied sea chantey the next. In other words, you can hear cultures cross-

pollinating, traditions toppling and music simply mingling. "What most people don't realize is that Argentinians are interested in tango as a fluid concept," Roderick explains. "It's not as static as people expect it to be here in the States."

Much of the music's malleability stems from the famous Argentine tango composer Ástor Piazzolla. El Gran Ástor, as he was known in his native land, not only fused the genre with Western elements such as jazz and classical music, but also introduced counterpoint and rich, angular harmonies to tango. His new style was fittingly dubbed nuevo tango. Roderick says, "I stumbled across Piazzolla and I was totally fascinated by his style of tango music. I was in a punk rock band before [MA52] and I was interested in fusing The Misfits and The Minutemen with that warm, spooky style of tango." Of course, the curious combination of Ástor Piazzolla and Glenn Danzig might not get Roderick's music on mainstream radio anytime soon, and his anti-rock accordion-led tango troupe might not put him on anyone's cool list, but he doesn't care about cool. "This music project is more a collection of band geeks instead of a bunch of rock 'n' rollers that are all about being cool," Roderick says, leaning back and kicking up his worn-out Converse. Besides, after hearing Roderick's Oregon tango broadcast on Buenos Aires' NPR station, the Argentinians probably think he's pretty cool anyway. **ew**

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