

music

It's All Natural

Over the years I've heard music inspired by medicinal plants and herbs, presidents, the 50 states, even the art and culture of tea. But Portland's **Bark Horn and Hide** were inspired by something that I never considered as a muse – *National Geographic* magazine.

The story Bark Horn and Hide create on their first full-length tells of Melville Bell Grosvenor, editor of the venerable magazine from 1957 to 1967 and grandson of Alexander Graham Bell. In the imagination of songwriter Andy Furgeson, Grosvenor is a madman possessed by the spirit of his grandfather who "takes a mystical journey through the perspectives of the silenced voices" in the magazine articles.

The subject matter on *National Road* is a zoological and anthropological collage clipped from a closet full of well-read issues. "This Abdomen Has Flown" provides the point of view of a honey ant, fated to be gorged with sustenance for the queen and workers, imprisoned by her swollen abdomen until a *National Geographic* explorer inadvertently sets her free. "Treasure of the Everglades" describes the love interest of a tree snail. Another song is about Ham, the first chimp in outer space, and "Wetherill Mesa" is about the Pueblo cliff dwellers.

But this isn't mopey music for out-of-work naturalists. The foursome has achieved a lush sound by each playing as many instruments as possible and switching off to keep things interesting. It's lively, punctuated by horns, glockenspiel, theremin, fuzzy guitar and enough layers of sound to populate a small rainforest. While it's vaguely psychedelic at times, singer Furgeson croons with a slight twang during the quieter moments and howls with the passion of a preacher when the song demands it. I hesitate to call it indie rock for science nerds, but that wouldn't be unflattering, in my lab notebook. Bark Horn and Hide plays with Hillstomp at 9 pm Saturday, Aug. 23, at Sam Bond's Garage. 21+ show. \$7. – *Vanessa Salvia*



Bark Horn and Hide

Other Side of the North

MTV Canada says **The Coast** is Canada's best kept secret. If you hear "Canadian band" and think of the bombast of Arcade Fire or the precision pop of Stars, you'll need to change your frame of mind a bit for this Toronto quartet, which sometimes sounds like there must be more than four guys making all that ruckus. "Floodlights," from the band's April album *Expatriate*, is dense, busy guitar rock that suggests a Cure influence in the guitar tones, though not the mood. *Expatriate* begins with a futuristic synth sound that quickly gives way to buoyancy and exuberance; the three-minute "Tightrope," which kicks off the record, is a perfect example of their overlapping vocals and tendency to pile melodies on top of each other until a song is fit to burst. But they shift gears quickly; "Nueva York" starts with a simple but compelling piano line that alternates, in the chorus, with an almost '80s dose of fizzy guitar. The Coast tends to the kind of indie guitar rock that places a lot of urgency in the drums and lets the guitars offer echoey chords and distinct snippets of melody – while keeping one hand in the last few years' piano-rock trend. But then there's "Killing Off Our Friends," for which three of the fellows in the band step back from the mics; one unadorned vocal line takes center stage for the verse; the guitar tones are clearer; the drums still have a party to get to, but the overall effect is nostalgic rather than on the verge of frenzy – at least to a point. Late in the record, "Play Me the Apostle" heads down an even quieter path. But The Coast has too much energy to stay restrained for long. The Coast and The Raggedy Annes play at 10 pm Wednesday, Aug. 27, at Luckey's. 21+ show. \$5. – *Molly Templeton*



JAMIE CAMPBELL

The Coast



Brittain Ashford

Zither Away

I wanted to say that the Autoharp is making a comeback, but then I came across no less than five annual Autoharp festivals, including the three-day Willamette Valley Autoharp Gathering in Salem. I guess the Autoharp never went out of style in the first place. The instrument has just aged with its performers, and looking at the pictures of the Salem event (on their unfortunately named website, wvag.com), the average Autoharp player is about 60 years old. Yep, the zither may never lose its association with the Mother Maybelle Carters of the world, but at least a few whippersnappers have picked up the wooden box and worked it into their musical repertoire. Take **Brittain Ashford**, for instance.

The Brooklynite makes the kind of navel-gazing, bedroom confessional folk that wouldn't differentiate her much from her young contemporaries were it not for the fact that she floats her music along on a nostalgic-minded menagerie of old-timey instruments. On her self-

released full-length, *There, But For You, Go I*, the songbird warbles in an ethereal, lilting voice that's similar to Sarah McLachlan, if the Lillith Fair star surrounded herself with Autoharps, toy pianos, dulcimers and a Marxophone (a kind of fretless mandolin-sounding zither). The Autoharp is Ashford's secret weapon, though, and she injects a new spirit into the aging instrument in the same way that Joanna Newsom made the harp hip again. Opening for Ashford are two Portland acts that incorporate strange sounds and instruments just as well. Y La Bamba laces its Latin American folk with soft classical guitars and shadowy, stuttering loops, while Meyercord works out his Bright Eyes-influenced compositions on cheap Casiotones and glockenspiels. It's a veritable thrift-store folk-rock jamboree, so brush up on your odd instrument trivia and try to guess what's what. Brittain Ashford plays with Y La Bamba and Meyercord at 7 pm Sunday, Aug. 24, at Cozmic Pizza. \$5. – *Jeremy Ohmes*

It's Logical

Though some questionable hip hop acts pass through Eugene, believe you me, this John Henry's show will be one for the ages because Brooklyn MC **Louis Logic** knows how to throw down. See, Louis Logic and partner J.J. Brown (who won't be at the Eugene show) recently made an EP, *Sin-A-Matic: The 80's Edition*, that remixes old school jams like "Land Down Under" (you know, by Men At Work) and Foreigner's "I Want To Know What Love Is," among others. Not easy songs to turn into dance jams, but Louis Logic did it, and he topped 'em off with fat rhymes so the head-nodders in the back have something to mull over while everyone else in the room gets down. The album's a nod to Louis Logic's 2003 debut record, *Sin-A-Matic* – only now, five years later, Louis Logic's putting his music out on established independent hip hop label Fat Beats. With gas prices the way they are, even successful East Coast artists are touring less (it's been a sparse summer, folks), so catch this dude on his West Coast tour – it might be a while before you get another chance. And next time, I fully expect him to be performing at the WOW Hall ... if not the McDonald. Oh, and Louis Logic plays with Seattle hip hop institution **The Let Go** (which contains well-known Seattle MC Kublakai), so show up on time if you can. Louis Logic, The Let Go, The Wright Brothers and Animal Farm play at 9 pm Tuesday, Aug. 26, at John Henry's. 21+ show. \$7. – *Sara Brickner*



Louis Logic

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