

The Sawyer Family



Join the Family

Maybe you think you don't care about the musical subgenre of psychobilly. Maybe the impeccable zombies-and-greasers style of **The Sawyer Family** doesn't seem like it's really your thing. Maybe you've never stumbled upon a Sawyer Family show and found yourself strangely charmed by the dark and moody spectacle of Count Vlad Zacul Sawyer's personal relationship with his double bass.

Your loss.

The Sawyer Family fellows, with their ever-so-serious array of graveyard dirges, murder ballads and retro rock filtered through a horror movie script, transcend what could be a limited audience of tattooed girls with pinup bangs and pompadour-wearing guys in leather jackets. The reason is simple: They're damn good at what they do. It might seem schtick, but the band's image is a backdrop to solid songwriting and that elusive quality best described as "togetherness": Even more than last time around, these four guys sound like a whole. *The Burning Times*, the Family's new album, is a sleek (but not slick) collection of songs that keeps the cheeky, creepy cleverness of 2006's *Why Did God Create the Sawyer Family?* while adding depth to the band's sound and displaying their range. "Buried Alive" is a frenzied, brief, distorted fright-night burst that leads into the oddly named, unexpectedly soaring instrumental "Fistful of Titties." Slouching, ominous, slinky "Flames" precedes the punkish, frantic "New England Fall"; the first single, the disarmingly pretty and sinister "Say Goodbye," showcases Master Seth Sawyer's ever-stronger mournful

vocal side. *The Burning Times* was recorded live, and it maintains an echoing feel, as if that recording took place in an abandoned barn. It also serves as a calling card for The Sawyer Family's shows: They're like this, only even better. The Sawyer Family celebrates the release of *The Burning Times* with The Goddamn Gallows and Scrapyard Swag at 9 pm Saturday, Nov. 15, at the WOW Hall. \$8 adv., \$10 door. — Molly Templeton



THIS WEEK'S GRRRLZ ROCK PICK

The Whiskey Spots Singing sweetheart Jamie Jarzemkoski makes the Whiskey Spots, whose old-timey, countrified speakeasy sound comes straight outta the freewheeling '20s. From ukelele to washtub bass, saw to kazoo, the jug band instrumentation and Jarzemkoski's coy, flirtatious vocals invoke Prohibition-era entertainment without the alcohol ban. With Madame Flod, Bajuana Tea, Soulicious and Halie Loren, 9 pm Friday, Nov. 14, Sam Bond's Garage. 21+. \$6. — Sara Brickner

Country Done Right

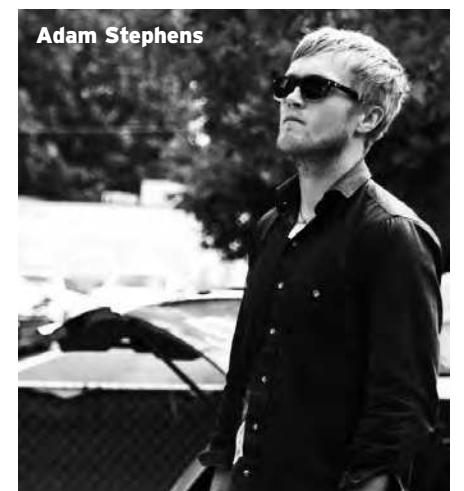
Even when he was writing frenzied punk songs for X, **John Doe** still had a soft spot in his barbed-wire heart for country music. He formed X's one-off country alter-ego, The Knitters, in 1985, and the group performed country originals, covers and even revamped versions of X songs done as swing and traditional country tunes. His penchant for rootsier music eventually worked its way into later X albums, but it took a hiatus from his punk rock day job for Doe to truly explore his country tendencies. 1990's *Meet John Doe* portrayed a raw and honest man saddling up his own musical horse and, with his weathered voice and Texas-sized guitar, riding circles around his country music contemporaries.

Fast-forward 18 years, seven solo albums, a sporadic acting career and an X reunion later and John Doe has settled into the kind of artist who is comfortable enough in his own well-worn skin that he quietly goes about his business, churning out one quality album after another. His song cycles, especially last year's *A Year in the Wilderness*, offer a brute realism combined with a country-folk-ballad tenderness that borrows equally from his gutsy punk rock past and his gentler mid-tempo present. And he's even become something of a guru, dishing out career

advice, recording tips and words of wisdom in his web column, WWJDD or What Would John Doe Do? One thing he's certain to do at this concert is show you how music is supposed to be done. John Doe plays with Kathleen Edwards at 8:30 pm Monday, Nov. 17 at John Henry's. 21+ show. \$20 adv., \$23 door. — Jeremy Ohmes

One Gallant Rides Solo

When **Adam Stephens** takes the stage at Sam Bond's on Wednesday, he might find a few looks of empathy. While touring in 2006 with his regular gig in San Francisco indie-rock act Two Gallants, he was repeatedly Tased by a Houston police officer who was responding to a noise complaint. Stephens escaped the melée, but his Gallant cohort, Tyson Vogel, was arrested. Fortunately, charges were thrown out after a video showed the police officer in the wrong.



But make no mistake, Stephens is no rabblouser. He's certainly got justice up his sleeve, but his solo songs more closely resemble cowboy poetry, like a folksier, slower-tempo Black Heart Procession. Switching from piano to an acoustic guitar for anthemic "The Miles We've Marched," Stephens is joined by tourmate Jen Grady on cello and backing vocals and crafts a Dylanesque narrative with lines of rhyming poetry, "And the silkworm stars / they weave our coats / they feast our eyes / they mend our throats." Whether you're in the I've-Been-Tased club or not, you should enjoy these raw, weathered tunes. Adam Stephens plays with Yeltsin at 9 pm Wednesday, Nov. 19, at Sam Bond's. 21+. \$7. — Chuck Adams

Still F.A.B.-ulous

Even though **Mistah F.A.B.** has been working on his major label debut, he made his mark first as an integral part of the Bay

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