

The Chosen Few

If you're a local band without much of a fanbase, gigs are usually limited to any corner bar that will let you plug in an amp, often for no pay. If you're lucky, a few people might even show up. Bars aren't readily open to under-age musicians, and without enough eyeballs in the crowd, an all-ages venue like the WOW Hall is out of reach.

Until now. As a former general manager of the WOW Hall, promoter Cindy Ingram knows how hard it is for local bands to get a shot at playing there. She created a website, EugeneChosen.com, in which people could vote by email for local bands who have never played there, and the four highest vote-getters would get to play. Out of more than 60 bands

and votes from more than 14,200 unique email addresses, Eugene has chosen, and the winners are: **The Killer Wails**, **Lyckwyd**, **Half Shark Half Jesus** and **Sons of Confusion**. Ingram also created a contest for the sexiest tattooist (Chris 51 of Area 51) and piercing artist (Josh Bryant from High Priestess).

"It's so abundantly clear that in this town bands want to play the WOW Hall," Ingram says. "It's a nice venue, it sounds great, it has a level of prestige, so I wanted them to have a chance." Ingram says local bands are reporting more hits on their MySpace pages, presumably from interested music fans poking around online.

A handful of bands who weren't top vote-getters in Eugene Chosen still won, in a sense, because they were able to get the attention of the WOW Hall and get a gig. Ingram says,



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"There's a dozen bands that wouldn't have been able to play the WOW Hall if it wasn't for this." Eugene Chosen bands play at 7:30 pm Saturday, May 16, at WOW Hall. \$8 adv., \$10 door. Free if you dress like Blinky or Vektra (characters from the Eugene Chosen site) – Vanessa Salvia

Real Passion

Fierce With Reality, the second release from local singer/songwriter **Jenny**, highlights the New Orleans native's rich, expressive voice over breezy folk rock melodies. One part Alison Krauss and two parts Bic Runga, Jenny delivers 14 new songs "lightly seasoned" by the music of the South.

"New Orleans music evokes such passion with its rhythms and variety," she says. "It's much like a gumbo!"

Jenny started singing as a child and made her first recording at the age of ten. Now a homemaking mother of three young children, she writes songs as a "labor of love." Her first album, 2007's *Free to Be Me*, was heavily inspired by the wreckage of Hurricane Katrina. "It ignited that fire within in me to 'sing out' the music that had so long been inside of me," she says, and to sing in the tradition of "strong women with not only a voice, but a message."

Fierce With Reality blends folk, rock, blues and pop with messages of empowerment and being true to oneself. "And if you think you know better than me," she sings on the title track, "well go ahead, tell your story, I'll listen to you ... I'll wait." Jenny plays at 8:30 pm Sunday, May 17 at Sam Bond's Garage. 21+. \$5. – Katie Kalk

Sweet Carolina

I've been hearing **The Avett Brothers'** name for years, but not until I slipped the band's 2007 release, *Emotionalism*, into my car's CD player did I begin to understand the appeal. You just can't listen to the Avetts through computer speakers – at least not

properly. This is music that needs air and space and movement; it needs to get between your fingers and wrap around your arms. It's old-timey and familiar, part of that growing cluster of bands that hover between rock and country and Americana and folk – and there's a whole 'nother question there about why there's so much love for this kind of old-fashioned sound of late – but it doesn't sound like the too-many other bands with that general description I've heard in the last few years alone. The main reason is simple: the graceful, catchy, subtly precise songwriting.

Sure, the Avetts' distinct voices, jaunty attitude and pristine harmonies don't hurt, either. But when I first heard "Black, Blue," a download/vinyl-only track from 2008's *The Second Gleam*, it felt like being let in on a secret. The delicate, regretful song builds from a single voice, acoustic guitar and banjo to a heartstring-tugging chorus that stretches with each go-round; a piano adds gravity, while more voices multiply the sense of yearning.

The Avetts don't make music you've never heard before; they make music that distills the best of the oh-let's-just-call-it-Americana boom into something with catchiness and clarity, joy and heartbreak, harmonies to lure a Fleet Foxes fan and just enough Carolina-boy foot-stomping, banjo-plucking spunk to make their appeal impossibly broad. My mom would probably love "Paranoia in B-flat Major" but while the song looks back to the music of a previous generation (or several), it's still informed by what's happened since. This isn't retro folk, or the rebirth of old country; it's the unselfconscious sound of small towns where the Internet is as much a fact of life as the folk songs you pick out on a half-out-of-tune piano. Get on the bandwagon – hey, you're still in time for the Avetts' Rick Rubin-produced major-label debut in August. The Avett Brothers and Jason Webley play at 8 pm Wednesday, May 20, at the McDonald Theatre. \$19 adv., \$24 door. – Molly Templeton

Let the Sun Shine On

A common theme quickly emerges when you scan the last few years of coverage of the **Willamette Valley Music Festival**: change. Well, that and a desperate hope that it not rain on festival weekend. In 2006, the UO's annual festival moved from campus to the Cuthbert and shrank from three days to two. In 2007, Suzi Steffen wondered, in her preview of the year's lineup, whether "folk" was still a broad enough term to cover the event. And in 2008, the former Willamette Valley Folk Festival became the WVMF, swapping out one genre tag for a broader term.

This year, change is still in the works: The WVMF has turned into a one-day, genre-spanning affair that puts local rock bands on the same stage with Sub Pop signees, mariachi acts with ukulele groups, blues duos with calypso musicians. The day begins early, with **Herschel Bloom** on the main stage at 10:45 am and **Iron Mango** on the second stage at 11:30 am, and continues on into the night – or at least the late evening – with the local likes of **Bad Mitten Orchestre**, **Walker T and Papa Soul** and **The Daveys**, among others.

The imported talent is likewise scattered over the day, from an early set from **Mariachi Viva Mexico** to mainstage headliners (and highlight of last year's Eugene Celebration) **Menomena**. The Portland indie-art-rockers are part of a PDX contingent that includes UO grad Ben Darwish's **Commotion**; the moody, dark, entrancing **Tu Fawning**, with 31Knots frontman Joe Haeg and singer-songwriter Corrina Repp; former *Willamette Week* best new band winner **Copy**, an electro-pop magician who is the only solo act ever to top *WW*'s annual list; and the twitchy, retro, post-punk trio **Guidance Counselor** (#8 on this year's *WW* list), who aim to "spread fun." Wedged between Guidance Counselor and Menomena is the critically acclaimed L.A. duo **No Age**, once described by *The New Yorker* as "noisy and often brilliant." The Willamette Valley Music Festival starts at 10:30 am Saturday, May 16, at the Cuthbert Amphitheater. Free. See full lineup at musicfest.uoregon.edu – Molly Templeton



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