

Back on the Farm

It's gotta be hard to keep a group together when its members live on opposite ends of the West Coast, which is why this upcoming **Animal Farm** show is one you shouldn't miss. Hanif Wondir now resides near the Bay Area, while Gen.Erik and Fury live in Portland, leaving only KWils to represent for the Eug. Honestly, Hanif's probably got the right idea – since, uh, the rest of the country actually pays attention to Bay Area hip hop – but living so far away makes it tough for the Farm to hold regular shows in Eugene (or anywhere else) as they did before. And yet, despite this (relative) absence, the rest of the world is starting to figure out what we've known for years: These guys are really good at laying down hip hop party jams, and not just because they're big fish in the small pond that is Eugene. *The Unknown*, Animal Farm's 2008 debut, made it to #3 on CMJ's College Hip Hop Chart and stayed in the top 10 for more than two months. Still, the record only hints at the energy the group brings to its live shows, and since there won't be as many of those as there once were, you won't want to miss this. And keep an eye out for the group's second album, which is slated to drop early next year. Animal Farm, Serge Severe, Luck One, Core and Asol play at 9 pm Friday, July 17, at John Henry's. 21+. \$4. – Sara Brickner

Quiet 'Time

The Pioneers of Prime Time TV make me want to curl up in front of a fireplace with a sad letter or an old notebook. Muted, heartbreaking and beautifully atmospheric, the Pioneers' songs have an under-the-stars feel, breathy vocals trading the front-and-center space with delicate violin and guitar, leaving plenty of room for the misty reflections and hazy memories their sound suggests. Their quiet, folky intimacy immediately calls to mind Iron & Wine (as well as Hem's *Rabbit Songs*, sans female vocals), so it's no surprise to find that the Pioneers do a lovely cover of Sam Beam's "Radio War." But the band's own songs are just as likely to slip into my ears like secrets, whispered and unforgettable. The Pioneers of Prime Time TV play with The Smart Brothers and Tornado Rider at 10 pm Friday, July 17, at Luckey's. 21+. \$5. – Molly Templeton



ANDERS FINK

Alexa Woodward

Spoon with Speck

I have a new theory: All you really need in life is a beautiful voice and a banjo. **Alexa Woodward** has both, and as she's leaving behind her law career for music, her rise to fame should be as meteoric as that of Vienna Teng – who gave up her software engineering career for piano pop – if the universe has any sense of justice.

Woodward is touring the country in a 1984 Westfalia to support her new, sophomore CD, *Speck*. There's something totally disarming about the way Woodward sings, with a roundness to her voice that plainly bears the mark of a Southern upbringing. But unlike delicate chanteuse Gillian Welch's sepia-toned obsession with a bygone era, you don't get the sense that Woodward needs a vintage dress to create authenticity.

She surrounds her voice with plucky banjo, singing saw and wistful mandolin, which give her songs a gothic quality, as on "Spoon," a song with lyrics as cryptic as those of Joanna Newsom. But to Woodward's credit, her music is nowhere near as indulgent. For all the spare arrangements and spacious melodies, it's her voice that takes the stage.

Woodward played at this year's Country Fair, and if you happened to catch her enchanting voice and want more – or missed out – you've got a couple more chances to see her in person. She is also making an appearance this weekend at the Saturday Market. Brian Cutean and Alexa Woodward play at 8:30 pm Sunday, July 19, at Sam Bond's. 21+. \$5. – Vanessa Salvia

Layered Smarts

Thanks to the magic of YouTube, I was inclined to like **Jenny Owen Youngs** before I'd even heard her music. In a clip from a recent L.A. show, Youngs plays a familiar little riff while bantering and trading "your mom" jokes with the fantastic Amanda Palmer. Palmer's a costumed cabaret punk; Youngs is fresh-faced and delivers better mom jokes. Both have a knack for covers: When the two finally quit cracking wise, Youngs' verses of Avril Lavigne's "Complicated" are nearly as charming as her version of Nelly's "Hot in Herre," which you can listen to on MySpace. Or, if you've a weakness for a certain kind of singer-songwriter – palatable and poppy, catchy and composed but with a sly side, an frequent flash of dry wit – you could just pick up Youngs' second album, *Transmitter Failure*.

Transmitter begins with a brief ukulele ditty, "First Person," which reappears later in the sped-up, slightly countrified "Last Person." "I'm not trying to make you think this is some kinda great big deal / I just know exactly how you feel," Youngs sings. In "Last Person," this becomes a romantic promise, but in "First," it sets an unexpected tone, as if Youngs is acknowledging the illusion of the first-person singer-songwriter: Just listen, and she'll reflect your mind right back at you, swaddled in a catchy or heartrending melody. Or she'll distract you: The following song, "Led to the Sea," is a polished, radio-ready, bass-heavy summer song complete with indie-rock disco beat and sweet backing vocals that eventually trails off, like the breadcrumb path in the lyrics. Many of Youngs' songs feel stretched just to fit, as if before they were smartly arranged and recorded, they began life in bedrooms and on lonely rooftops, quietly composed in Youngs' versatile voice, which easily shifts from elegant and sireny to breathy to belting ("Secrets" is a romping, three-minute showcase). *Transmitter* is richly layered, confessional ballads snuggling up to wry admissions, strings that sweep sharing space with ukuleles that chirp, but Youngs' voice is the eye of the lush, poppy hurricane. Jenny Owen Youngs opens for William Fitzsimmons at 8 pm Tuesday, July 21, at the WOW Hall. \$10 adv., \$12 door. – Molly Templeton



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