

Greening the Concept

Oklahoma! and so much more

Remember when critics hailed the development of the so-called concept album — variously identified as commencing with *In the Wee Small Hours*, *Pet Sounds*, *Sgt. Pepper*, *Tommy*, take your pick — as the big transformation of rock from disposable pap to Major Artistic Statement? Then came the backlash, and pre-concept album rock was hailed for its unpretentious freshness. A similar phenomenon happened two generations earlier with musicals. In 1927, the great composer Jerome Kern teamed with lyricist Oscar Hammerstein to create *Showboat*, whose elements all contributed to tell a powerful story, rather than the plot being a mere contrivance to stitch together some hit tunes. As it turned out, *Showboat* spawned plenty of great songs, and this summer's **Oregon Festival of American Music** continues its tribute to the American songbook with a Thursday concert featuring songs from *Showboat* and other Kern and Hammerstein hits. The trend toward so called "integrated" musicals culminated in Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1943 *Oklahoma*, and OFAM's full staging of that classic continues through this weekend at the Hult Center.

Over the years, OFAM has made a strong case for the dizzy, once-dismissed pre-integrated musicals such as those perpetrated by the Gershwin brothers, and the festival's Aug. 6 evening concert includes glorious songs (including "Fascinating Rhythm," "How Long Has This Been Going On?" and more) from several of them, plus a generous selection of the finest tunes ("Summertime," "Bess You Is My Woman Now" and so many more) from perhaps the pinnacle of American music, the Gershwins' opera *Porgy and Bess*.

The festival concludes with a tribute to the great songbook interpreter Billie Holiday on August 7, and a recreation of two more landmark moments in American

music: the celebrated Spirituals To Swing concerts at Carnegie Hall, staged by legendary producer John Hammond and featuring swing-era immortals like Count Basie's orchestra and Benny Goodman's quintet. Of course, we won't hear those titans, but in these and the other OFAM concerts, we'll hear the songs interpreted by a stalwart crew of local and imported musicians with special expertise in this music. Unless otherwise noted, all concerts take place at the Shedd.



Glenn Marla

On August 15, the Shedd also hosts a fundraising concert supporting that other great downtown arts and music institute, DIVA, and featuring three terrific musicians' musicians. Eugene discovered the percussive guitar techniques and wide ranging styles (flamenco to Celtic and more) of **Justin King** before he won wider acclaim and tours with stars like Al Green and B.B. King. San Francisco fretless bassist **Michael Manning** broke into national consciousness during his tenure at Windham Hill records, where he appeared with some of the 1980s' finest acoustic ensembles and led one of

the best, Montreux. He's also explored more adventurous territory in stints with Henry Kaiser and Wadada Leo Smith and is one of the best bassists on the planet. And flugelhornist **Jeff Oster** (who also wields a sweet trumpet) has forged a sturdy reputation among fans of acoustic jazz and instrumental music.

DIVA itself hosts three touring boundary busting artists on August 11. Multimedia artist **Heather Acs** somehow embraces working class Appalachian and Mexican imagery, string theory and more in her nonlinear storytelling. Performance artist **Glenn Marla** comedically explores a transexual perspective on childhood memories and how we see our bodies. **Silas**

fiddler Fabrice Martinez, which traverses Transylvanian gypsy tunes, Parisian hot jazz, flashy flamenco and more. The similarly hard-to-pigeonhole acoustic band **Taarka** hits Corvallis' Bombs Away Cafe on Aug. 7. And on August 10, Eugene's own tango mavens, Mood Area 52, host a house concert at 840 West 3rd that also features a couple of should-be-better known Bay Area artists: compelling composer/multiinstrumentalist **Mark Growden** (who's earned accolades by scoring music for dance, film, and theater) and singer **Kim Boekbinder**, from Vermillion Lies, a sister act that uses typewriters and toy pianos along with more common instruments in its cheerfully quirky folksy tunes.



Silas Howard

Howard (from the band Tribe 8) recounts another trans trail through San Francisco's queer punk world and Hollywood glitz.

Even though the music season traditionally dries up along with front lawns this time of year, August boasts some excellent concerts showcasing a wide variety of global rhythms. On Aug. 14, Cozmic Pizza hosts Zimbabwean mbira mistress **Patience Chaitzevi** playing the mesmerizing music of southern Africa's Shona people. The next evening, Cozmic features Oakland's wild and wonderful neo gypsy **Fishtank Ensemble**, led by French

One of the summer's best jazz shows features a pair of up and coming young ensembles. Eugene's saxman **Hashem Assadullahi** and trumpeter **Douglas Detrick** have both released excellent new albums this year, and their collaborations have been ever fruitful. At Cozmic on Aug. 7, their quintet opens for the New York-Boston based **Mark Zaleski Band**, another promising pride of 20-somethings who have no trouble integrating the jammy Medeski Martin and Wood sound with vintage bop stylings from a half century earlier. **EW**

Fearless Leaders

The Melvins always put a twist on their music

Once again, the Melvins prove they don't color within the lines. Each of the 15 tracks on the band's new CD, *Chicken Switch*, due out Sept. 29 on Ipecac Records, is a remix, but not of just one song — each track is a remix of an entire Melvins album.

Singer/guitarist Buzz Osborne's opinion about it could be summed up with his response to my first statement in our recent phone interview:

Me: "It's not what I expected."

Osborne: "Mission accomplished."

The project was spearheaded by a friend of the band who selected the remixers and created the album's artwork (which Osborne's wife has done for every Melvins album since 1993). "It was a real departure for us," Osborne says. Osborne did not want the remix album to sound just like the originals. "I absolutely did not want that to happen," he says. "I wanted it to be something that you wouldn't just get from buying any of our records. I knew it was going to be weird, and that's what I wanted."

It's weird, all right. If you've learned to appreciate the experimentalism of their 1994 album *Prick*, you might find your way to a truce with this one. Remixers include Matmos, Lee Ranaldo, Merzbow, V/Vm and David Scott Stone, Melvins' guitarist/bassist for about six years.

Perhaps the track most true to the original source material is Ranaldo's. While there are snatches of recognizable bits throughout the disc, and some track titles provide a clue to the parent album, most tracks are a wash of distortion and noise. (The band won't be playing any of the remixes on stage.) Osborne is pleased, even if he himself can't tell where most of the sounds come from.

Osborne expressed chagrin at the opinion that the Melvins "just screw with people" through their music. "If we wanted to screw with people, that's a really easy



The Melvins

7:30 pm Sunday, Aug. 9

John Henry's • \$15

21+

ERIN BROADLEY

thing to do. If people think that's what we're doing then they really have no intimate understanding of what it is that motivates us," he says. "I have a love of music. I also have a love of originality, and surprises. People should expect that what they're going to get from us is ... not the usual. I have no idea what our audience likes. I only know what I like, and I would like this record, so there you go." — *Vanessa Salvia*