

Portrait of the Boy Eating Drum Machine

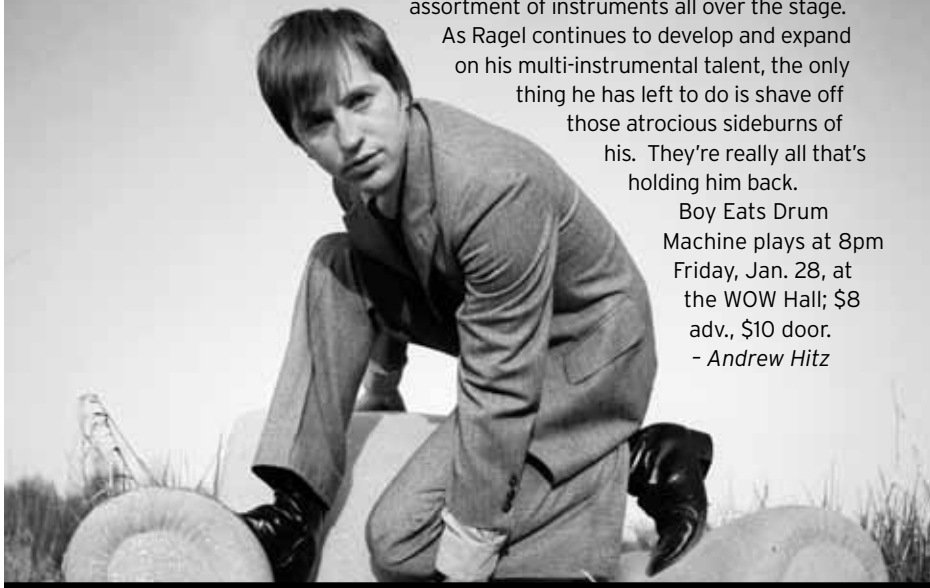
Portland's **Boy Eats Drum Machine**, a.k.a. Jon Ragel, is literally a one-man band. A funky amalgam of horns, synth and percussion all blend in a glitchy, many times disharmonic yet extremely danceable meshwork as Ragel stands guard over the turntables and a variety of other instruments. This is music made with inspiration coming from seemingly everywhere, yet harnessed all together by Ragel's casually confident voice and mastering ability.

Ragel's newest release, *September's 20 Beats*, differs from his other works by going heavy on the percussion and synth and laying off the vocals that dominate his other albums. This seems to be the progression of a talented electronica artist, and it's not necessarily a bad thing. Where his other albums have an almost post-punk, rocky sound to them, this one is more in the vein of Tobacco or other heavy analog-synth musicians; the snare and hi-hat of the acoustic drum kit keep things real.

This funky mixture of digital-analog, flow-glitch and jazzy improv to highly calculated beats – plus odd snippets of vocal melody – all blend into something worth checking out, if only for the entertainment factor of watching Ragel juggling his odd assortment of instruments all over the stage.

As Ragel continues to develop and expand on his multi-instrumental talent, the only thing he has left to do is shave off those atrocious sideburns of his. They're really all that's holding him back.

Boy Eats Drum Machine plays at 8pm Friday, Jan. 28, at the WOW Hall; \$8 adv., \$10 door.
- Andrew Hitz



With Circa Vitae, It's 'About Life'

The phrase "circa vitae" is Latin for "about life" and, by natural extension, change. The Eugene band by the same name came together in 2008 and soon after released a self-titled EP. And though the voices and music of the five band members seemed to mesh beautifully, life changes. Vocalist and keyboardist Anna Ponto, the lone female with a rich timbre and soaring drama to her voice, is no longer part of the band. Ponto moved to Portland, and difficulties in managing practices led them to enlist Erin Flood, a singer with a similar style.

Their new CD, *Lovers*, was tracked mostly live at the end of 2009 and includes Ponto's vocals. "So there's the feel of the moment," says guitarist Wesley Curtis. Curtis also plays in folk pop duo Martini and James, which took a month-long trip this summer to see the country and play gigs – another reason *Lovers* was delayed. The remainder of the band is Britt Brady (vocal/guitar), Thaddeus Moore (drummer) and Nate Beveridge (bass), all of whom have other musical projects.

"I think *Lovers* is a nice step forward for us," says Curtis. "I feel like we grew a lot and you can hear it. The album sound is relatively similar but I'd like to think it's more mature."

One of the most appealing aspects of **Circa Vitae's** swooning Radiohead-esque pop was the interplay of Brady and Ponto's voices. But Curtis is confident that Flood will be equally appealing. Flood has sung with several local bands, including Tyler Fortier. "She's a really great singer," Curtis says. So don't let change scare you off; after all, that's what life's about. Circa Vitae celebrates its CD release with Purple Sparrows and Motae at 9:30pm Friday, Jan. 28, at Sam Bond's; 21+ show, \$5.

- Vanessa Salvia

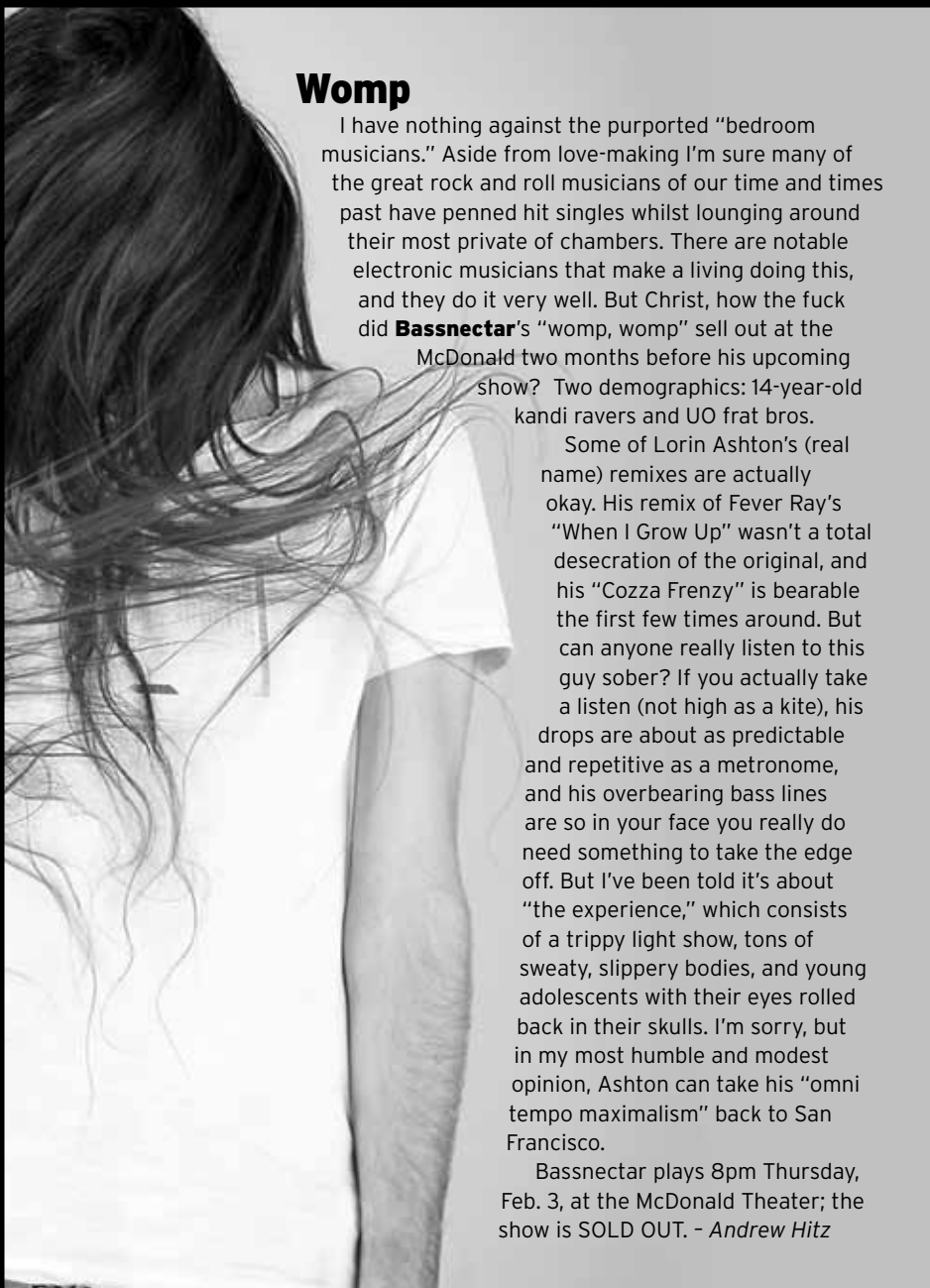


Womp

I have nothing against the purported "bedroom musicians." Aside from love-making I'm sure many of the great rock and roll musicians of our time and times past have penned hit singles whilst lounging around their most private of chambers. There are notable electronic musicians that make a living doing this, and they do it very well. But Christ, how the fuck did **Bassnectar's** "womp, womp" sell out at the McDonald two months before his upcoming show? Two demographics: 14-year-old kandi ravers and UO frat bros.

Some of Lorin Ashton's (real name) remixes are actually okay. His remix of Fever Ray's "When I Grow Up" wasn't a total desecration of the original, and his "Cozza Frenzy" is bearable the first few times around. But can anyone really listen to this guy sober? If you actually take a listen (not high as a kite), his drops are about as predictable and repetitive as a metronome, and his overbearing bass lines are so in your face you really do need something to take the edge off. But I've been told it's about "the experience," which consists of a trippy light show, tons of sweaty, slippery bodies, and young adolescents with their eyes rolled back in their skulls. I'm sorry, but in my most humble and modest opinion, Ashton can take his "omni tempo maximalism" back to San Francisco.

Bassnectar plays 8pm Thursday, Feb. 3, at the McDonald Theater; the show is SOLD OUT. - Andrew Hitz



Sit under the Bodhi Tree

It's been six years since we've heard new music from **Laura Kemp**. The last time I spoke with Eugene's favorite songstress, it was to congratulate her for winning Favorite Vocalist and Solo Performer in *EW's* 2009 "Best of Eugene" issue. She had recently returned from a six-month-long, life-changing trip to India that she now feels helped "wrap up" music she'd written earlier in her life.

It's easy to tell that trip is still influential, even though only three songs on *Bodhi Tree* are overtly about India. "I don't think I was ready with the songs before I went or it would have been a very different CD," Kemp says. "My other CDs have been so relationship focused. This one feels more inward."

"Waxer's Song" was written from the perspective of a dog that Kemp lost when a relationship ended. Another song, "Lucinda May," is about her own dog and includes the poignant lines: "'Cinda May, I wish I could be like you / Forgiving myself for everything bad that I do."

"No Regrets" is about Kemp's relationship with her life. "That's definitely looking back at my 44 years I've lived and just thinking about the different paths I've taken and the decisions I've made, and trying to be OK with it all," she says.

Bodhi Tree was produced in Nashville by Uygur "Nomad" Ovunc, the partner in both music and life of former Eugenean Mare Wakefield. This represents the first time Kemp left Eugene to record and produce, though Nashville is familiar to her.

"I feel like going to Nashville was as big a deal as India," she recalls. "I went to college in Nashville, so it was pretty wild to go back but not be a student anymore. I felt like it was consistent with the whole India experience in that so much of it was about letting go. In Nashville I had to let someone else put their creative control on this project and see what happened. I'm really happy with it."

Laura Kemp performs a CD release show at 8pm Saturday, Jan. 29, at Unity of the Valley Church, 3912 Dillard; all ages, \$10.50 adv., \$12 door. - Vanessa Salvia