



Ripe for the Garage

It's refreshing to see a strong woman on stage with a mandolin in her hands. That particular role, typically dominated by male-bodied folk in string bands, is pivotal. The mandolin, usually seen played by women only in its classical guise, defines a great deal of string-band topography – those shrill plucks that carry listeners over musical plateaus to mountain-top exclamations.

Fruition's Mimi Naja is helping turn the tides on this patriarchal history of the mandolin. Never shy about whipping out the guitar or banjo as well, Naja can summon foot stompin' and free spirits swooning at a moment's notice. She and the rest of the Portland-based quintet have been making quite the splash just north of us, playing shows with the likes of Leftover Salmon, Greensky Bluegrass, Elephant Revival, Dead Winter Carpenters and Water Tower Bucket Boys. Sam Bond's will showcase them Friday, Feb. 10, playing with Eugene's Alder St. All-Stars – a rowdy group of string pickers that never fails to get the tables and chairs cleared off Bond's dance floor. Fruition – with two guitars and well-rounded songs – certainly leans more on the folky side of the string spectrum, but the band doesn't wander too far from the occasional jam. And lined up next to the hard-hitting grit of the All-Stars, the band will fit right in, here in the Eug.

Fruition plays with the Alder St. All-Stars 9:30 pm Friday, Feb. 10, at Sam Bond's; \$5. – *Andrew Hitz*

Third Eye Statesmen

Pretend for a moment that you're a member of an iconic music crew. You've released your seminal work years ago, and prevailing trends have seen the mainstream of your genre devolve from highly educated emcee orators into codeine-guzzling degenerates (here's lookin' at you, Wayne). You don't want to raise a white flag to the wackness, but you're not about to give up on your life's work either. What do you do?



To find the answer to that question and more, I made my way down to WOW Hall Tuesday night to see Hieroglyphics, that hip hop super group rivaled only by the Wu Tang in its deft displays of ensemble microphone crushing. As I self-medicated in the beer den and observed the crowd, I suddenly felt I'd traveled back in time to a campus basement party circa 1997: the vague muddled beats blaring through long past due speakers, playing to a collection of people who seem to have nothing in common other than the fact they were walking by and heard the bass – stoners, slackers and surf rats, hoods in Oakland caps, all with an excitement that could only have come from the realization that no one in the room was going to demand that they get jiggy with it.

This show was advertised as a sort of showcase for the new material of each respective Hieroglyph. I settled into a corner seat, content to spend my time amongst the b-boys in the back, while the Hiero crew took the stage and put on a hip hop clinic.

Rifling through abridged versions of tracks both fresh and classic, the former new hopes of hip hop showed they hadn't lost a step. Each emcee took his turn in a revolving showcase of this-is-what-we've-done-for-you-lately, debuting cuts that held up surprisingly well alongside older work. The group mixed in favorites from the Hiero and Souls of Mischief catalogues, including a couple from '93 *Til Infinity*. They rocked crowd favorites spanning the gamut from my childhood to now – for a lot of the heads in the audience, yours truly included, we literally grew up with these guys. Kids who came into the world with the first Souls of Mischief record are now graduating high school.

Toward the end of the show, Pep Love made mention of the fact that everyone on stage had been in the game for a "long, long time ... from the golden era ... to where we are now," and this was true. But it was surreal witnessing a group so defined by youthful exuberance now take the role of elder statesmen, all before hitting 40.

Hip hop today is much like a bad reality show, a veritable GOP primary of pop culture, filled with a cast of characters that, while technically qualified to be in their positions, really have no business being there at all. I'm tempted to ask where a group like Hieroglyphics is supposed to fit into all of it, until I realized that they never will – and that's a good thing. Hieroglyphics are the third eye of hip hop, a group of emcees content to spit on their own terms, asking you to bridge the gap between what you think is hip hop and what you know is. – *Mark Sullivan*

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