



Narrative Indie Rock, Omaha Style

Is *I Am Gemini* a concept album or a rock opera? "People can call it whatever they feel comfortable calling it," says **Cursive** vocalist and primary songwriter Tim Kasher of his group's upcoming release.

Regardless of how it is categorized, *I Am Gemini* continues Cursive's tradition of wedding a narrative arc with raw and emotional Omaha-style indie rock. The album pushes Kasher's usual storytelling into surrealist territory – telling a Cain and Abel story of twin brothers Cassius and Pollock, who are separated at birth.

Rounding out the cast of characters (the album's liner notes resemble the script of an opera, complete with a cast listing) is a chorus of angels, a chorus of devils, and twin sisters conjoined at the head. Backing up the story is Cursive's signature hard-hitting indie rock with metal, hardcore and prog-rock flourishes.

In today's Mp3-dominated music market it might seem odd to put out a piece of work better suited to listening as a whole. "We grew up with albums. We listen to albums," Kasher says. "I feel good we carry that flag." But Kasher assures that *I Am Gemini* needn't be listened to in one sitting to be enjoyed, nor does the band plan on playing the album from start to finish live.

"We suggest you listen to it in one piece, but that's up to you. You're the listener," says the storyteller.

Cursive plays with Ume 8 pm Monday, Feb. 20, at WOW Hall; \$15 adv., \$18 door. – *William Kennedy*

Beauty and the Brass

Well, it's more like beauties, beats, brass and bass when **MarchFourth Marching Band** (M4) is in town. For those unfamiliar, the Portland-based improv troupe is an experience of ruffled burlesque panties, bass guitar and the sonic blaring of saxophone. It's as if Charley Grapewin met Sgt. Pepper and a Mardi Gras parade on its way to Black Rock City – or if Gogol Bordello and Les Claypool conceived a project together, then abandoned it in the French Quarter.

M4 is more than just a party. It is a well-devised, meticulously tailored, immersive event where sound melts into a blur of flaming hula hoops and trapeze acts. The group's uniforms, a montage of leopard print and bejeweled shakos, embroidered vests and jackets, striped pants, frilly corsets and steampunk goggles, are all individually designed and crafted by the band.

M4 demands all of the senses at once, propelling its audience into an interactive world of dance, exhilaration and ecstasy. Much like other marching bands and burlesque troupes, M4 presents itself as one-half performance art and one-half musical outfit, the latter fusing New Orleans brass with Eastern European folk, jazz and world music.

There's no shortage of muttonchops or Victorian apparel for M4 or its Portland counterparts **Vagabond Opera**, which gigs Friday, Feb. 17. This leaves only a final logistical question – how to cram stilt performers and fire spinners inside WOW Hall? I'm sure there's a way.

MarchFourth Marching Band and Samba Ja play 9 pm Saturday, Feb. 18, at WOW Hall; \$12 adv., \$15 door. Two day pass (Feb. 17-18) available at WOW Hall for \$20. – *Andrew Hitz*



Same Scene, Different Style

As far as contemporary hyper-relevance goes, **Sazon Booyah** is another supernova internet meme, exploding before discovery and peppering pop culture with the remnants. Equipped with a new spin-off style called Moombahton, NYC producers Mr. Vega and DJ Sav integrate a minimal Dutch-house foundation with ramped-up reggaeton. Similar to dubstep, techno, R&B and hip hop, Sazon Booyah is poised for heavy mainstream taxation and diluted redistribution – but that hasn't happened yet.

Despite heavy praise from electro-heavyweight Skrillex, Sazon Booyah does not ascribe to the trends of contemporary electronica. The group's existence proves that American producers can veer from the thrash path of reprocessed whomp-and-rattle that has become standard procedure for electronic music shows.

Along with a cadre of well-received pop remixes (already itching for commercial duress), Sazon Booyah's original cuts, particularly from the group's recent release, *Take Over Volume 1: Moombahton*, offer a twisted scattering of tantalizing sounds that don't completely overwhelm the listener. It is easy to hear different percussive layers and rhythms without succumbing to waves of distorted bass. It is this unique blending that sets Sazon Booyah apart from the routines of contemporary electronic music producers. These guys are more like nimble-fingered barbers, as opposed to just another set of DJs trying to haze a pre-heated audience. This will be a solid show, more than worth its weight in wattage.

Sazon Booyah plays 9 pm Thursday, Feb. 16, at WOW Hall; \$5-\$8. – *Patrick Newson*

6 Strings, 19 Frets, No Limits

Today's musical generation has transcended guitar. There are probably a thousand objectors who could claim this statement is erroneous, but long gone are the days when guitar gods were held at the highest tier of mainstream music. Who's today's Jimmy Page? I once heard somebody say that Lil Wayne is the Hendrix of our time, and in a sad, callous, downright sickening way, it's true – he's supposedly doing things with his genre that nobody previously thought possible, just like Jimi did.

If it weren't for those musicians out there on the front lines, trying their best to prove that there are no limitations attached to six strings and nineteen frets, this writer would weep. **Andy McKee** is one of those musicians.

McKee plays with a virtuosic finger-picking technique that's as enigmatically idiosyncratic as it is impressively familiar. Every note and compositional detail is deliberate, like tiles in a Roman mosaic, and the finished product is always a jaw-dropper.

After spending his teenage years learning to play guitar from instructional videos in Topeka, Kan., McKee drew influence from other solo acoustic players – notably Don Ross. Then, within a decade of picking up the guitar, McKee released his debut LP. That's fast work by anybody's standards, not to mention that releasing five more records in the next decade is also pretty badass.

Gathering a following on the internet has its pros and cons, a severe con of course being piracy, and McKee has responded to the world of file sharing like the boss he is. A comment beneath a torrent for one of McKee's albums on The Pirate Bay – a popular file-sharing hub – reads:

"Yeah thanks a lot for uploading! It's not like I need to make a living with my music or anything. 8,676 thieves. If you really appreciate what I am doing, buy my CD legitimately so I can continue to compose music rather than work at Kmart. I'm not Metallica. I don't have hundreds of thousands of dollars, much less millions."

Three guesses on who wrote that.

Andy McKee and Antoine Dufour play 7 pm Sunday, Feb. 19, at WOW Hall; \$15. – *Andy Valentine*

