



One-Man Band Jam Band

You're at your first Keller Williams show, not quite knowing what to expect. The stage is littered with guitars, a drum pad, speakers, synths. A regular-looking guy takes the stage and the crowd perks up. "Is this Williams?" you think to yourself, slowly clapping. This seemingly average dude steps to the drum pad and taps out a beat, recording a quick loop before sliding over to one of the guitars where he strums a few notes to create a fuller bass line, recording another loop.

Williams, sporting shaggy hair and a t-shirt, steps back to fiddle with a few knobs, grabs a swig of his water bottle and approaches the mic. As he begins to sing, it becomes clear – this multi-tasking wonder is no roadie.

Seeing Williams perform is like watching a one-man jam band; while he's got great stoner tunes like "There's a Doobie in my Pocket," he taps a much wider range, hitting genres from bluegrass to reggae, jazz to folk.

Williams, a Virginia native, has been touring consistently since the early '90s. Those years of solo musicianship went mostly ignored in crowded bars, leading to Williams' decision to incorporate looping techniques for larger sound. As a result, the past decade has seen Williams selling out shows, headlining festivals and even mastering new instruments.

It's not just the impressive looping that keeps you engaged during his show. A self-taught guitar player, Williams is a whiz on six, eight or 12 strings, and plays with a look of pure joy. There are silly songs, irreverent songs and even kid-friendly songs. With more than 16 albums and seemingly endless inspiration to draw upon, no two gigs are ever alike. Whatever you do, don't forget your dancing shoes.

Keller Williams plays 9 pm Friday, Feb. 24, at WOW Hall; \$19 adv., \$21 door. – Jackie Varriano

Rampant Balkaholism

There's a rich supply of folk music out there, and it's a vein that **Opa Groupa** isn't afraid to tap. The band has formed its own brand of rhythmic, danceable world music. Take the *Aladdin* soundtrack, the *Darjeeling Limited* soundtrack, a sprinkling of Gypsy punk, and you've got yourself one hell of a dance party.

Forming a contemporary world-folk outfit is all about making something new without completely disgracing the traditions of old – Opa Groupa stays true to this formula, grabbing only tiny threads of modern-day edge – chunky upright bass, jam-band guitar solos, etc. – to throw into its tunes. And it seems the group is quite comfortable with its current identity, too; after all, each show has been a success, and there's perhaps nothing more rewarding than making music that's irresistibly danceable.

Eugene-based world group **Kef** has a similar draw to its style, although there's probably a tiny part of every world-music critic that wants to denounce Opa Groupa in the face of Kef's seemingly hardcore traditionalism.

At the end of the day, it's that allure of music from afar that makes groups like Kef and Opa Groupa exciting. They're unique, fun, and above all else, talented bands that know how to get a room hopping. Being self-proclaimed "Balkaholics" is probably tough work sometimes (at least as far as composition goes), but these guys are psyched on it, and we are, too.

Opa Groupa and Kef play 10 pm Friday, Feb. 24, at Luckey's; \$5. – Andy Valentine

Electronic Elegance

For those who fiend for the authenticity of Portland's indie-art aesthetic, the idiosyncrasy of the power duo and the elegance of a classical stringed instrument, **Talkdemonic** (pictured right) is your Homeric lotus fruit, your Coleridgean *Xanadu* – with Lisa Molinaro on viola and Kevin O'Connor on drums, loops and laptop (and the occasional avant-banjo thrown in), Talkdemonic comes to Eugene as a complete package. The duo stands outside of genre tags – even its own – which it seems to transcend every few years or so, bouncing from hip-hop project to "folktronic hop" to what's become a post-rock montage of digital soundscapes and emotive string bending.

With avant-garde classical musicians abounding just about everywhere, not to mention their proliferation here on the West Coast, there has been a dramatic increase in the versatility of classical instruments on stage and seemingly infinite creative options in the studio. Talkdemonic innovates with a patently Portland flair. Torrents of cymbals crash into the calmed, soothed draw of the viola, reminiscent of a more organic, less sampled Album Leaf. The group's song structure retains elements of post-rock, but is all the more concise with songs that rarely reach four minutes in length. Talkdemonic is certainly ripe for another night at Sam Bond's, but Molinaro might have to break out her chicken fiddle instead of her viola, and O'Connor will probably ratchet up the twang on that banjo.

Talkdemonic plays with Growwler and Ferns 9:30 pm Friday, Feb. 24, at Sam Bond's; \$8. – Andrew Hitz



Motorists Rev it Up

Dan Jones is the bed-headed poet laureate of Eugene. More of a verbal fix-it man than a lyricist, Jones finds beauty in the ordinary while coaxing poetry from things most writers leave in the garage. His songs are delivered in a Neil Young-esque holler or Lou Reed-style talk/sing; when these styles fight, it sounds like free jazz and a host of other good-hearted downtrodden folks just gettin' by. Those who've been around Eugene a while are familiar with the many incarnations of Dan Jones – acoustic troubador, rock 'n' roll bandleader with the Squids, and now he's stepped it up yet again with the **Golden Motors**.

The Golden Motors boast members of legendary Eugene bands like the Cherry Poppin' Daddies, The Pass-Out Kings and Stagger and Sway. The quartet has been bangin' around clubs in Eugene and beyond for years and has now released its debut album. The self-titled recording is a rambling collection of Nuggets-era '60s garage-rock, '70s and '80s punk, and Sonic Youth experimentation.

Rarely has Dan Jones been this loud and raucous. But what never gets lost is Jones' wide-eyed, Midwestern wonderment and childlike joy at stepping to the mic – like an 8-year-old-boy biting into a hot dog at his first Major League Baseball game.

The Golden Motors' album release show is 6 pm Saturday, Feb. 25, at Sam Bond's, Free; and 9:30 pm Saturday, Feb. 25, at Sam Bond's, \$5, 21+. – William Kennedy



PHOTO BY CLAIRE FLINT LAST / CLAIREFLINT.COM