

**Label-Jumping, Jump-Starting, Ever-Evolving Bastards**

Take the duo She and Him, subtract Zoëy Deschanel's cutesy retro twang, add some indie-folk swagger with rangy vocals, and **Heartless Bastards** begin to take shape. Erika Wennerstrom is the woman behind the striking vocals of the band, which started in 2002 as only a recording project. Throughout the band's somewhat rocky history, Heartless Bastards have cycled through a number of different musicians, with singer/guitarist/songwriter Wennerstrom remaining the one constant. With some of the original band members now back in the lineup, Heartless Bastards consist of drummer Dave Colvin, bassist Jesse Ebaugh and guitarist Mark Nathan.

"I feel really great about the band I'm playing with," Wennerstrom says. "I feel like we have a really good chemistry that maybe hadn't been there before." Her speaking voice sounds like a slightly less assured version of her singing voice – a bit gruff, but solid.

In a sort of backwards chain of events, the Bastards toured in support of their current album before recording it. Almost all of the tracks on *Arrow* were laid down live, post tour, so the band had the chance to get completely comfortable with the songs before committing them to posterity. The resulting sound lends an authenticity and character to the album that well suits Wennerstrom's strong voice and somewhat old-school melodies.

"*Arrow* is the first album where the live sound of the band has really been captured," Wennerstrom says. "I feel like it sounds like we're just sitting, playing on a porch somewhere."

Along with this new approach to recording came a new record label. For nearly a decade the Bastards were signed with Fat Possum Records, but last year they announced they were switching to the Brooklyn-based label Partisan Records. Don't bother scouring *Gawker* for evidence of any messy affairs though. According to Wennerstrom, there was no scandalous reason behind the switch. It was just "a good time for the band to make a change," she says.

"Partisan is newer and trying to make their way in the world," Wennerstrom explains, "and the Heartless Bastards are too."

Heartless Bastards play with David Vandervelde and Brian Lopez 9 pm Friday, April 6, at WOW Hall; \$15 adv., \$18 door.

– Natalie Horner



**Vintage Pop, Pure Soul & One Pecan Pie**

**Leo London** loves old things. His Eugene apartment is filled with vintage movie posters, vinyl records and a typewriter.

"I'm a digger," says London. "I love to find the kernel."

As a child, London inherited a record collection from his dad and uncle – the "good shit," he clarifies, like the Beatles and the Clash. He grew up with a printing press and linotype in the garage, sparking a young man's romance with relics from another time.

And this love affair with the past shows up in Leo London's songwriting, inspired by big names like Nilsson, Newman, Lennon, Cohen and Reed. His latest release *Television Kids* pays tribute to these icons and more. And it's good, really fucking good – both too good for our modest city, and as good as Eugene's unheralded music scene is capable of being.

"So Long" is a big soulful weepy piano ballad with London's voice at times a dead-ringer for Damon Albarn of Blur. "Sun Punches" is an Elliott Smith-style, lo-fi folk guitar interlude. And "PDX" recalls '70s New York post-punk revamped via early Strokes.

All of this makes sense, because London recorded *Television Kids* at former Eugene musician Justin King's Brooklyn studio, allowing a bit of big city soot to creep into his sound. The songs feature a New York drummer who played in exchange for only a pecan pie – a debt London has yet to repay.

Planning a "soft release" of the record at Sam Bond's (CDs will be given away), London will press *Television Kids* to vinyl by the end of April. So come to the show and help London's drummer finally get that pie.

Leo London plays with Boom Chick 9 pm Saturday, April 7, at Sam Bond's; \$7.

– William Kennedy

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