

Back to the Mothership

Half a century since the '60s, and modern music continues to rely on the neural framework of psychedelia established during that seminal decade. Sure, not everybody is noodling on guitars and hand-dancing, but for San Francisco's **Monophonics**, the set and setting haven't changed. What has changed is the music. "We try to stay true to the old-school, retro style of our genre, but mix it up with some modern stuff, too," vocalist/keyboardist Kelly Finnigan says. "This soul and funk resurgence is great to see and be a part of."

Indeed, the combination of guitarist Ian McDonald, bassist Myles O'Mahony and drummer Austin Bohlman, plus the soaring horns of trumpeter Ryan Scott and saxophonist Alex Baky – as well as the rich synth and echoing voice of Finnigan – creates the sense that the only thing missing is George Clinton's mothership. Heavy thump-and-bump funk with a twist of what Finnigan calls "the drug influences of the psychedelic movement" allows Monophonics to become a polyphonic sonic trip.

"Monophonics are in your brain," McDonald says, in reference to the practice as well as the product, the band's recently released record. *In Your Brain*, a tighter, more mature effort than previous albums, is a well-rounded cranial exploration that makes your pupils dilate almost as fast as your legs start moving. The eponymous single, "In Your Brain," is a lifted swinging throw-back jam, while "Mirage" and "Temptation" are cooler, groovier, soul-wailing numbers. And it only proves the point when Monophonics cover Sly and the Family Stone's "There's a Riot Going On."

Monophonics play 9 pm Saturday, July 7, at Diablo's Downtown Lounge; \$10 adv., \$13 door. – *Patrick Newson*



A Drop in the Bucket

Dating back to antiquity, musicians and entertainers have taken to the streets seeking fame and fortune through song, dance and tricks. Today, buskers remain a common sight the world over, from magicians wooing street-corner crowds to the Naked Cowboy strumming his guitar in Times Square.

Eugene's streets may be home to many a panhandler with a guitar, but three locals in particular are revealing a serious belief in their ability to entertain as mobile musicians.

His card reads "**Stephen St. Claire**, Accordionist and Balladeer." You can find St. Claire on the produce side of Saturday Market, decked out in a three-piece suit, his hair slicked back and glasses perched on the tip of his nose. His song repertoire evokes the fantasy scene of a quaint European market, and you half expect to find a monkey dancing at his feet.

A musician by the age of seven, St. Claire, now 29, has been playing the accordion since 2005. He takes his accordionist persona seriously. "I wouldn't play on the street if I thought I couldn't entertain somebody," he says. "If I had a bunch of songs that weren't really put together on accordion, I wouldn't feel right putting on a show and asking for money."

Fellow troubadour **Samuel 'Beefcake' Mitchell**, 21, has also been playing since childhood. Catch him in the company of banjo player and guitarist **Sarah Jean Olson** as these musicians cruise through town in a red pickup affectionately known as Piano Truck.

The piano – set up in the bed of the pickup and adorned with a stuffed, three-legged coyote named Family – is Mitchell's stage, allowing him to draw in crowds with a blend of ragtime, jazz and dirty blues. He plays family friendly during the day, but come night he hauls out a bevy of clever originals with titles like "Road Kill Ballad," and he refers to his piano as "delightfully out of tune."

"It's different than stage performance; it's different than cinema," Mitchell explains. "It's a whole new thing. I'm a walk-by performer and I have to grab people's attention as they are walking by. But I play to hundreds of people a day."

Violinist **Christopher Stark**, 20, got his start at the age of six in the Suzuki Strings Program. He's won concerto competitions, and he placed fourth in Oregon's state competition. He is currently a music student at UO.

For Stark, busking is a chance to practice new pieces in a setting that differs from the concert hall. He performs on the produce side of the Saturday Market, where he says he's noticed that people show more appreciation for classical pieces on the violin.

"For me, music has always been about emotional context – the reaction of the audience, making them enjoy it the same way I'm enjoying it, is one of the things I like the most," Stark says.

Keep street performers on our streets: Fuel their passion by tossing a buck into the bucket the next time you find yourself strolling by. – *Jackie Varriano*

Bluegrass, Blue-gene

The year is eighteen hundred 'n' somethin'. Hezekiah Goldfarb is making his way across the Oregon Trail from Tennessee. Among Goldfarb's personal belongings is a single piece of real Tennessee grass, the color of sky on a clear day. He protects this slender blade throughout his arduous journey and when he arrives in the Willamette Valley, Goldfarb plants it in the fertile soil.

Little does Goldfarb know, as the reed grows it releases magical powers that seep not only into the soil, but also into the water and the rivers of Hezekiah's new home. Now, more than 150 years later – as cities and towns have sprung up in the valley – those who drink the water or eat from the earth have a little bit of that magical Tennessee bluegrass in them.

OK, this is B.S., but it goes a long way in explaining why so many folks here are bonkers for bluegrass. If this story were true, Eugene band **Rusty Still** would make Mr. Goldfarb proud with their fancy pickin' and fiddlin'. Rusty Still blends pro musicianship, bluegrass tradition, newgrass sounds and western swing into warm and inviting, toe-tappin' tracks like "Washington County."

Or maybe the legend is true, and Rusty Still has discovered the original patch of earth once tended by pioneer Hezekiah Goldfarb, unlocking the secrets of traditional Tennessee music planted there so long ago. See it live and find out.

Rusty Still plays 8:30 pm Friday, July 6, at Axe & Fiddle; \$3. – *William Kennedy*



Music in the Raw

Eugene singer-songwriter **Caroline Bauer** is only 21, but the lyrics to her gracefully composed love songs might have you thinking differently. Yes, Bauer is calendar young, but she's a musician wise beyond her years.

Until just few years back, Bauer was hesitant about sharing her art with the public. "My music always felt private like an intimate experience," she says, "but when it got the point where I really wanted to share it with people, that nervousness went away really organically."

Bauer's songwriting reveals an unrefined and folksy vibe that is balanced by the pure, authentic nature of her love songs. Relying solely on her voice and guitar (and the occasional appearance of her ukulele), Bauer creates an unprocessed sound that maintains its innocence. "It's well-produced but also raw," she says.

"Of all the emotions, love is the feeling that inspires me the most," Bauer explains. And love is what this singer appears to know best. Bauer's music is honest and vulnerable, and that vulnerability is what creates the softness that is so appealing.

Currently, Bauer is busy preparing tracks for a full-length album – one that she says she hopes will be released by the end of the year. Her EP, *Goodbye Beautiful*, is available for free download on her website at soundcloud.com/music-by-caroline

Caroline Bauer plays 5 pm Thursday, July 5, at Cozmic; FREE. – *Ali Enright*