

# FUNKY OREGONISMS

**Volifonix** wins Next Big Thing 2012 BY WILLIAM KENNEDY



TOMO TSURUMI, TREVOR FORBESS, BLAKE FORBESS, JOE MCCLAIN AND ELIJAH MEDINA OF VOLIFONIX PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

It was a battle of opposites at *Eugene Weekly's* Next Big Thing finals this year. First up: Paul Quillen — his brooding, acoustic ballads turned Celebration-goer heads who were otherwise occupied on a perfect late-summer Saturday in Eugene with Cart De Frisco and Ninkasi. It ain't easy filling up an outdoor stage with just voice and guitar, and Quillen had us all holding our breath, listening intently. A relative newcomer to Eugene, Quillen is perfect for the area's small, intimate venues. Welcome to town, Paul.

Next up on the KRVM/*Eugene Weekly* stage: Volifonix, grilling-up a USDA-certified hunk of beefy funk-rock, medium rare. The Eugene-based five-piece, which released a second studio album *Space* in June, made it to the finals on the strength of the single "Till Forever Shows." The song showcases soaring vocals and formidable musicianship, mixing the psyche-a-funk-a-fun of early Red Hot Chili

Peppers, a group that has inspired Volifonix, with the more mature edge of the Chili Peppers' recent work. "Till forever shows" is definitely a new direction for us," Volifonix vocalist and rhythm guitar player Trevor Forbess says.

And the winner of Next Big Thing '12 is Volifonix, so whatever this new direction is, it's working. "Till Forever Shows" is supposed to be a modern rock song," lead guitarist Joe McClain says. "It is not meant to sound like an old Chili Peppers song, so it makes sense that it sounds more modern than *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* and other [Chili Pepper work] in that era."

Volifonix may be the Next Big Thing, but if you've paid attention to live music in Eugene for a while, you know these guys are not the Next New Thing. Forming the core of the group are brothers Trevor and Blake Forbess, originally from Oakland, Ore. The brothers gained their love of music from their father and uncles. "Blake and I

were surrounded by live music from a very early age," Trevor says. "Our Uncle Kevin can play every Jimmy Page solo," adds Blake, who plays drums.

After recruiting Elijah Medina on bass from nearby Sutherlin, the trio moved to Eugene in 2005 where they hooked up with lead guitarist Joe McClain, who at that time was a student at UO. When it came time to record their debut album *Oregonisms* in 2009, the group rounded itself out with Tomo Tsurumi on saxophone, becoming "two brothers, two others and a samurai," jokes the group's official bio.

It didn't take long for Volifonix' brand of funk-rock to catch on in Eugene, and they soon began jamming on stages all over the Northwest and beyond, playing Seattle's Bumbershoot festival in 2009 and touring Asia in 2011. "Everything moves really fast over there," Trevor jokes, "faster than what I'm used to in the woods of Oregon."