

Party Crashing with Sassparilla

If you've ever been to a **Sassparilla** show, you know what it means to party. A local favorite, Portland's Sassparilla is known to blow the roof off Sam Bond's with high-energy, harmonica blowin', banjo pickin', washboard slappin', a-few-more-beers-and-the-room-is-spinnin' junkyard blues. But it seems that there's a party Sassparilla isn't getting invited to – it's called "The Big Time." And with their new release *Maggie*, they're banging on the door saying, "We cleaned up real nice. We spit-shined our shoes. Now let us in!"

"I wrote the tunes more for myself this time than in other cases," says Sassparilla frontman Kevin Blackwell, explaining that inspiration for *Maggie* came from places like '70s pop Pandora stations. "There was no reason to not write a record that sounded like nine different bands." *Maggie* does sound like nine different bands, and none of them sound much like Sassparilla. Overall, the group has traded in its insurgent blues attack for happy, George Harrison-esque guitar on "Threadbare" and poppy bouncing keyboards on "Mary Celeste." These are two of the album's strongest tracks, but will no doubt make die-hard Sassparilla fans take notice of the new direction.

Don't let Sassparilla using terms like "growing up musically" scare you. There's plenty for old-time fans to learn to love on *Maggie*. "Two Black Hearts" recalls the blues-rock of the Black Keys, Ross McDonald's harmonica remains front and center, and Blackwell's lyrics still tell bluesy tales of the downtrodden and brokenhearted. In the song "Star," Blackwell sings, "Just because they like it doesn't mean it's any good." You can't help but feel he's aiming that at those who might second-guess Sassparilla's new direction. I think the crowd at Sam Bond's will be the final judge, and I hope that *Maggie* gets Sassparilla just where they're trying to go.

Sassparilla plays with Lone Madrone 9:30 pm Friday, Sept. 21, at Sam Bond's Garage; \$5. 21+. – *William Kennedy*

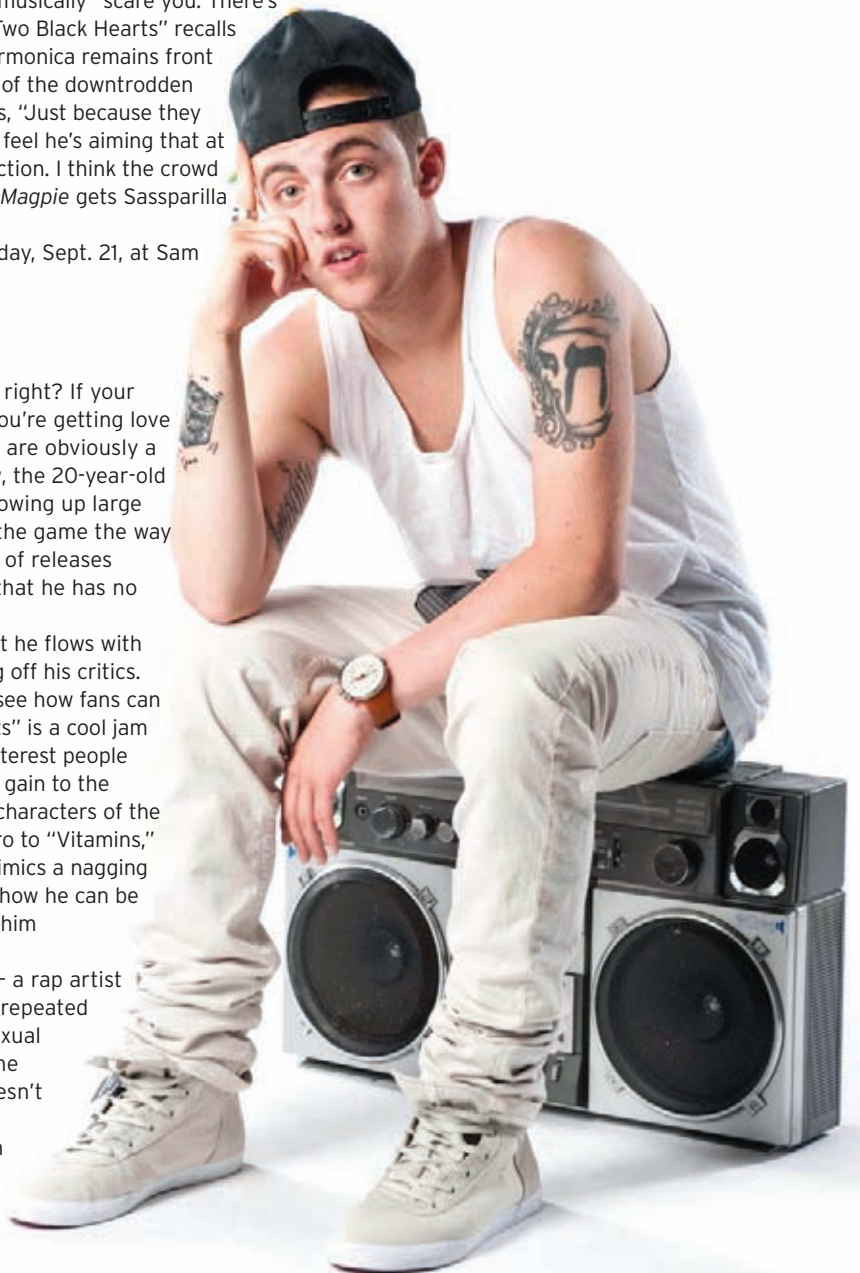
Miller is Macadelic

Three million-plus Facebook fans can't be wrong, right? If your YouTube videos have over 15 million hits each and you're getting love from the likes of *The Source* and *XXL Magazine*, you are obviously a hot commodity. Welcome to the world of **Mac Miller**, the 20-year-old freestyle-rapping Pittsburgh native who has been blowing up large for the better part of a year now. He isn't changing the game the way Dre or Eminem or even Nelly did, but with a handful of releases already under his belt, the prolific artist is showing that he has no intention of slowing down anytime soon.

The most intriguing aspect of Miller's tracks is that he flows with ease whether he's just shooting the breeze or dusting off his critics. His feathers don't get ruffled easily, and it is easy to see how fans can appreciate his sense of humor. "Aliens Fighting Robots" is a cool jam showcasing the absurdities of life from the fleeting interest people take in each other as long as they have something to gain to the notion that life isn't going to change until the titular characters of the song bring an end to the world. Meanwhile, in the intro to "Vitamins," the baby-faced Miller adopts a mocking tone as he mimics a nagging parent telling him to take his vitamins, and – just to show he can be thought-provoking – "Thoughts From a Balcony" has him rhapsodizing about making dreams reality.

While a lot of his content is not groundbreaking – a rap artist who drops f-bombs like there's no tomorrow, makes repeated drug, alcohol and club references and talks about sexual escapades isn't exactly blazing any trails – the way he presents himself and his tunes is noteworthy. He doesn't just drop heavy beats that swallow up his words and everything else in his songs, but instead he brings in an odd variety of sounds to complement them.

Mac Miller plays 7 pm Tuesday, Sept. 25, at Cuthbert Amphitheater; \$35. – *Brian Palmer*



A Lifetime with John Williams

If you want an idea of how prolific composer **John Williams** is, consider this: By the time he wrote the music for *Star Wars* in the mid '70s, he had already composed scores for 45 films (11 had earned Academy Awards nominations, two had won Oscars).

Now over 100 films, five Oscars and 17 Grammys deep, the Laureate Conductor of the Boston Pops shows no signs of coming to a full rest. He still writes music every day with his preferred pen and paper, including the upcoming film *Lincoln* directed by Steven Spielberg. Classic FM recently asked Williams, who turned 80 this year, if he plans to retire. Baffled, he replied, "No, no, no. I don't know how you retire from music. It's breathing. It's eating. It's functioning for probably all of us."

Cue a sigh of relief for all you music composition nerds and film geeks. Now prepare to freak out. Williams will be conducting many fan favorites this Saturday evening with the Eugene Symphony including scores from *Star Wars*, *Superman*, *Harry Potter*, *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Audiences will also be privy to "equally amazing but perhaps less well-known music from films like *Far and Away*, a tango he arranged for *Scent of a Woman* and a truly fantastic violin solo from his first Oscar-winning score, *Fiddler on the Roof*, featuring Bing Wang, associate concertmaster of the LA Philharmonic," Executive Director of the Eugene Symphony Association Scott Freck says.

This is hardly a tour – Williams is only playing a handful of shows around the country. Colleague, flutist and local Eugene Symphony supporter Louise DiTullio suggested that he make a stop in Eugene. And one other thing hooked the world's most successful composer. "John also has an affinity for having his concerts serve as fundraisers, particularly to support youth education programs," Freck says. All proceeds from "An Evening with John Williams" will go to Eugene Symphony's education programs.

John Williams plays with the Eugene Symphony 8 pm Saturday, Sept. 21, at Hult Center; \$95-\$125. – *Alexandra Notman*



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