

BREAKING CHAINS

Chain and The Gang is an “anti-liberty” group, jokes Ian Svenonius. This doesn’t mean Svenonius takes personal freedom lightly. “We’re a little bit perverse,” says Svenonius, formerly of legendary D.C. punk bands Nation of Ulysses and The Make-Up. “We’re not interested in playing out this one idea of prescribed rebellion.”

In an era when we’re told freedom is protected by war and drone strikes, Svenonius says real discussion of liberty is rare. “Anti-liberty can be seen as provocation,” Svenonius admits. “People are afraid to say anything because they won’t get invited to the party. It’s all about language and parsing language — a reflection of our political discussion.”

Chain and The Gang seem like protest singers or run-of-the-mill rebel rockers — neither is exactly true. “I’m really interested in older rock ‘n’ roll that’s more gospel-based,” Svenonius says. “Chain and The Gang is a call-and-response group [usually between Svenonius and a female vocalist]. A lot of it is skeletal arrangement, almost ad-lib, but always with a rhythmic imperative. It’s just rock ‘n’ roll really. We want to communicate, engage an audience, make something exciting happen — not just recite songs in a row.”

But Chain and The Gang can’t suppress their spirit of punk rock rejection, often with an arch sense of humor. “Nuff Said,” from 2012’s *In Cool Blood*, seems to poke fun at Facebook and Twitter loudmouths when Svenonius sings, “Can’t stand it anymore/ ‘Nuff said.” And in “I’m Not Interested (In Being Interested) Pt. 1,” he could be satirizing social media self obsession: “I’m not interested in anybody whose name is you ... I’m not interested in anybody whose name is not me.”

Chain and The Gang play with Portland’s The Shivas and Thee Four Teens 8 pm Sunday, Jan. 12, at Paper Moon Photo Studio; \$5.

— William Kennedy



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