

# THE DADDIES DO BALLET

Eugene Ballet Company brings out the softer side of the Cherry Poppin' Daddies with Zoot Suit Riot

The Eugene Ballet Company is perhaps best known for its professional approach to traditional ballets, perfecting performances like *The Nutcracker* for the past 32 years. Yet occasionally, artistic director Toni Pimble likes to shake things up by exploring a new artistic vision or collaboration. Following collaborations with bands The Freudian Slips, Pink Martini and The Jazz Kings, the EBC will team up with local boys the Cherry Poppin' Daddies for *Zoot Suit Riot*, a visual storytelling told through dance and set to the tune of the band's extensive musical cache.

But make no mistake: Although the Daddies are probably best known for their swing-inspired 1997 album *Zoot Suit Riot*, the show will not attempt to transport audiences back to the Swing Era.

"It'll be more contemporary. We've done the swing thing," Pimble says of the company's past work with the Jazz Kings. Pimble will be getting a hand from new choreographer Sarah Ebert as well. "So I don't feel stuck in that. In fact, I think it will be fun to get away from it."

Daddies lead singer Steve Perry believes that the project will be a great opportunity to showcase some of the band's lesser-known, more thematic material. With 11 of the Daddies' songs, spanning five different albums, resting in Pimble's seasoned choreographing hands, the band is



EBC DANCERS  
MARK TUCKER,  
DANIELLE TOMIE  
AND REED SOUTHER

gearing up to rehearse music, new and old, that they rarely play for a live audience.

"Lots of people know us only from our swing stuff, but each one of our records has slower tunes with different themes and not many people are aware of that," he says. "There's plenty of material that's artistically interesting."

For example, "Chrysalis," a song off the band's *Rapid City Muscle Car* album, is a slower, ska-inspired tune that the band rarely plays at live shows, due to its slower tempo. Yet, as Perry explains, the song is about a character evolving to artistic fruition, which could provide the audience with a vivid dance re-telling. Pimble explains that choreography to songs like "Pink Elephant," which Perry wrote about a 1920s speakeasy club, will most likely capture the mood of the era without getting too literal.

"We're trying to get away from being literal in any sense of the word," Pimble explains. "The way that [Perry] writes his lyrics is exactly the same. He feels that he doesn't want to spell it out for you and that if you listen to it, you can draw your own conclusions."

At first, the boisterous Daddies and the poised EBC may seem like an unlikely pairing, but at second glance, the partnership is surprisingly seamless. The Daddies' contemporary take on music of the past — such as their new Rat Pack tribute album to be released this year — provides Pimble and the EBC a perfect palette to keep redefining what traditional ballet is capable of in the modern age. — *Lauren Messman*

*The Eugene Ballet Company performs Zoot Suit Riot with the Cherry Poppin' Daddies 7:30 pm Saturday, April 12, and 2 pm and 7:30 pm Sunday, April 13; \$28-\$53.*

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School of Music and Dance

Saturday, Feb. 8 | 7:30 p.m.  
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