

SWAG SOLDIER

Type “**Soulja Boy**” into YouTube, click the video for “Crank Dat” (with more than 158 million views, mind you) and dance along as you listen to the hip-hop song that took 2007 by storm.

DeAndre “Soulja Boy” Way always knew he was going to be “the next big thing” in the rap game — and even said as much on the Wikipedia page that he created for himself when he was 15. He worked at Burger King in high school, but before he was 20 “Crank That” helped him earn a major record deal and a Grammy nomination.

But it doesn’t stop at the crank.

Songs like “Pretty Boy Swag,” “Kiss Me Thru The Phone” and “Turn My Swag On” solidified his role as the inventor of swagger rap. In fact, he tells *EW* that when he was hanging out with Justin Bieber last week, Bieber told him that no one would be using the word “swag” (which Way defines as anything that is dope, fly or different) if it weren’t for Soulja Boy’s music.

“I come off the stage from performing for 20,000 people? That’s swag,” Way says. “I pull up with the new Versace jacket on? That’s swag.”

Soulja Boy is also known for sharing swag pictures with his 45 million social media followers. While he already owns many of the items (a Bentley, Maserati, Rolex, Hugo Boss watch) from his favorite book, *Luxury Items for Men*, he plans to purchase a two-seater jet that can take off from the water.

When Soulja Boy comes to Eugene, expect to hear all of his old hits as well as tracks from the brand-new release *King Soulja 3*. He says the album features “bigger collaborations and producers” than earlier work.

“Every college that I go to, they’re always crunk. You know what I’m saying? I always have a good time,” he says.

Soulja Boy performs with Wavey Jones, Poverty’s Posterboy and Prince Hyph 8 pm Saturday, Aug. 9, at the UO EMU Ballroom; \$20 adv., \$25 door. Tickets available at elixr.cc/souljaboyeugene. — *Bryan Kalbrosky*

MISSION FROM MARS

Bruno Mars knows exactly what he is doing, and he does it better than just about anyone in the business. Not only has he released two chart-topping albums — 2010’s *Doo-Wops & Hooligans* and 2012’s *Unorthodox Jukebox* — sold over 100 million copies of his singles and albums and won multiple Grammys, but he’d made a name for himself prior to all of this as a songwriter and producer. B.o.B.’s “Nothin’ On You,” for example? Co-written by Mars. Cee-Lo Green’s “F*** You”? Ditto. So, yes; he knows the music biz.

On *Unorthodox* in particular, Mars’ star burns brightly. Whether it’s the hip-shaking beats on “Natalie,” his soulful vocal performance on the piano ballad “When I Was Your Man” or blasting through the über-catchy “Locked out of Heaven,” the way he approaches his content is hypnotic. He brings the funk to the dance party on “Treasure” too, and “Moonshine” is so reminiscent of ’80s-era Michael Jackson it’s eerie.

Unorthodox proves *Doo-Wops* was not a fluke. If your success leads to a voice appearance in the film *Rio 2* and performing at the Super Bowl XLVIII Halftime Show, you’re bound to leave a legacy.

Bruno Mars brings his Moonshine Jungle tour to Eugene 8 pm Monday, Aug. 11, at Matthew Knight Arena; \$39.50-\$99.50 — *Brian Palmer*

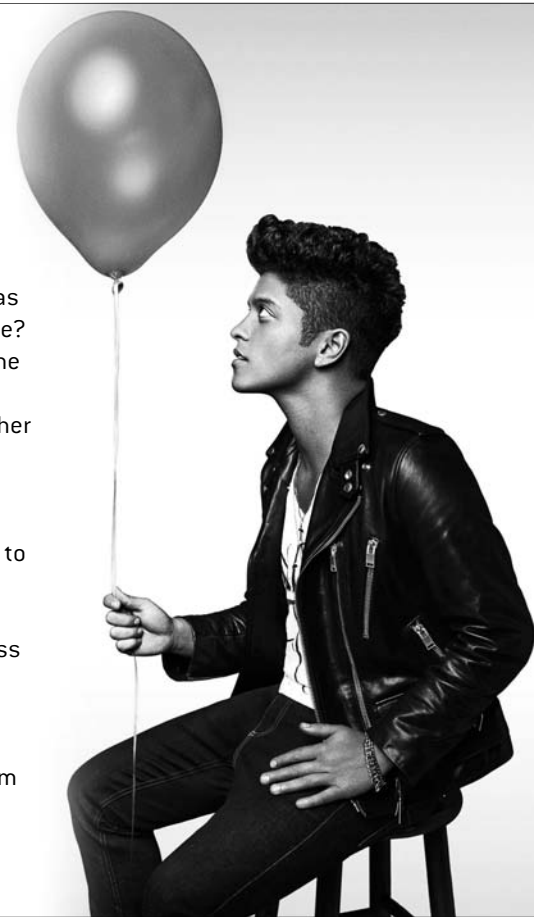


PHOTO BY KAI Z. FENG

TRUE TRANS SOUL REBELS

In 2014, what does punk rock mean? “Playing as fast as you can? Playing three chords?” poses Atom Willard, drummer for **Against Me!** “Spiking your hair? Punk rock is doing what isn’t generally smiled upon by the masses,” Willard says. “Doing something you believe in and isn’t easy to do — basically going against the grain.” Willard says the gender transition of Against Me! vocalist Laura Jane Grace (born Thomas James Gabel) is one of the most punk rock things he’s ever witnessed.

A longtime fan, Willard officially joined Against Me! in 2012. “They say so many times ‘Don’t meet your heroes.’ In that sense I’ve been really fortunate,” he says, describing the journey from fan to band member. “It’s only enhanced the experience.” Against Me! is touring in support of this year’s *Transgender Dysphoria Blues*, a collection of raw, Clash-inspired punk rock anthems.

Throughout, with songs like “Osama Bin Laden as the Crucified Christ” and “Fuckmylife666,” Grace expresses strong opinions both personal and political, her melodic voice soaring over persistent pop-punk tempos and aggressive guitar playing. And Willard’s urgent percussion provides punch, roll and bounce as evidenced in the title track, a song which, along with the record’s “True Trans Soul Rebel,” might be the best and only punk songs ever written about gender dysphoria, with lyrics like “Does god bless your transsexual heart, True Trans Soul Rebel?”

Against Me! plays with **Creepoid** and **Venus De Mars** 8 pm Thursday, Aug. 14, at WOW Hall; \$17. — *William Kennedy*



PHOTO BY RYAN RUSSELL