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## PHISHING SEASON

**Phish** hasn't played Eugene since 1994. Hard to believe, but look it up: It's true. One might think inheritors of the Grateful Dead's status of jam-band Grand Poobah would go along with Eugene like Texas and Odwalla. But alas, nary a tour stop here for 20 years.

All that changes Friday, Oct. 17, when Phish plays Matthew Knight Arena in support of the 2014 release, *Fuego*, a record many critics are calling a return to form for the group. But anyone who knows Phish knows a new record isn't really the point; like any good jam band, a new record is just an excuse for Phish to hit the road.

Certain segments of Phish fandom will freak out, but the band does warrant some comparisons to the Grateful Dead. Let's clear one thing up: While inspired by The Dead, Phish doesn't sound *that* much like the legendary group. Yes, they jam, and there are plenty of extended musical sections on *Fuego* as well as a Garcia-meets-Clapton tone to bandleader Trey Anastasio's guitar solos — particularly on the open-up-the-engine-and-let-it-ride track "Devotion to a Dream."

And there's also the requisite genre-switching that Phish has come to be known for, like a little reggae in "Waiting All Night." Tracks "555" and "Wombat" are spicy like New Orleans-style funk, and album-opener "Fuego" has stylistic hairpin turns that'll make your head spin. But many argue Phish are tighter and more musically proficient than The Dead, and this is abundantly clear on much of *Fuego*.

Phish met in the '80s at a small Vermont college, and for more than 30 years the group has maintained a fun, collegiate and youthful aura about themselves — remaining just as much of their era as the more urban (but no less arty) Talking Heads.

Welcome these college-rock, jam-band survivors back to Eugene and tell them to visit more often. Phish plays 7:30 pm Friday, Oct. 17, at Matthew Knight Arena; \$57. — *William Kennedy*



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