



THE SEARCH FOR CANDY CONTINUES

Aaron Carter just keeps coming back to Eugene

It's easy to get confused by the ups and downs of today's music scene. We've lost foundational icons like Prince and Bowie. Zayn left One Direction (and was kind of a butthead about it) and no one knows what the hell Iggy Azalea is doing. Shit has gotten weird.

Alas, there is a twinkle in the far-off distance — hope shining through the dark, cold night. Oh, wait: That's Aaron Carter and his frosted tips. Yes, folks, Aaron Carter (younger brother of Nick Carter from Backstreet Boys) is coming back to Eugene May 8 at WOW Hall.

Just in case you didn't squeal over the blond-haired,

nasty case of bankruptcy. So where is the allure?

This isn't Carter's first time at WOW Hall and it may not be his last. Through his career highs and lows, fans have stayed faithful and swooning. Bob Fennessy, who's worked at WOW Hall for the past 25 years, has seen the Carter enthusiasm firsthand, but as far as being a Carter fan himself, he demurs. "No, I was born too soon," Fennessy says. "I was too old for Bobby, Donny and ..."

No, no, Bob. It's *The Aaron Carter* — the kid who just wanted to find his one true love by the angelic name of Candy, who beat Shaq and who made Lizzie McGuire's preteen Christmas dreams come true.

Unconventional, indeed. Carter, a once-rising child pop star, disappeared for years after a wobbly career turn and financial hardship, and then *pow*, he's back with a shit-ton of tats and an obvious love for his own abs. He even returned to headlines recently for a Twitter hullabaloo over his declared love for and endorsement of Donald Trump.

What's not to love about the Carter's triumphant return? According to a 2013 Q&A in the *Emerald* with the musician before his first memorable Eugene performance, Carter was asked what he looked forward to most in Eugene. "I don't know, I heard there are cute girls there," Carter replied. "I don't know, you tell me."

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blue-eyed pop performer as a tween, here's a little backstory: Carter began making bubble-gum jams in the late '90s before hitting puberty. By age 7 he was the lead singer of Dead End (no joke on the name), an alt-rock boy band. Something in his youthful bones called him into the realm of pop, and by 13 he had sold millions of albums, some of which went triple platinum.

Carter was never the glory of the pop scene and his shining moments of fame were fleeting. For reasons unknown to the universe and all who inhabit it, Carter's career stayed humble and then fizzled out by his late teens, followed by a

Ah, yes, Fennessy's memory is sparked. Carter has performed at WOW twice, with the general turnout being "almost all female," Fennessy says. "I think I counted maybe five guys out of a crowd of over 100."

The second time Carter came to town, though, the crowd numbers were less enthusiastic due to a Duck game schedule conflict. Priorities, people.

The concert hall is best known for hosting a wide variety of music. "Hip hop, electronica, rock, reggae, bluegrass and comedy are popular," Fennessy says. "But people always crave the unconventional."

His way with words is also evident in his soon-to-be released album *LØVE*, a musical journey that combines his old pop sounds with the mysteries of his all-grown-up suaveness. Will this be Carter's second rise to fame and fortune? Will his new sound bring empowerment, versatility and life to the modern-day music scene? (LOL, no, we have Beyonce, we're good!)

Maybe. But maybe Carter's true magic is in what once was and not what will be. ■

Aaron Carter plays 8 pm Sunday, May 8, at WOW Hall; \$15 adv., \$18 door, VIP \$50.