

BEST QUIET BASSIST AT KESEY SQUARE

Heads swivel almost all the way around when people first see the rainbow-colored rock god shredding quietly at Kesey Square. Paunchy office workers on their way to the Broadway Starbucks don't seem to be able to process what their eyes are taking in.

They don't get it. And so maybe they chalk the strange vision up to Eugene quirk.

Nonetheless, Karen Dalyea is doing something very important.

Bass guitar slung around her neck and headphones blasting '60s rock hits, Dalyea lugs her heavy backpack all the way from her west Eugene apartment to the middle of town nearly every day, weather permitting, and sometimes not.

Wedge in one of the pockets of her straining rucksack is a live mini wireless Roland guitar amplifier.

What powers that thing?

"I have no fucking idea," she says.

Her musical influences include Elvis Presley — "I thought he was a lesbian when I was a little girl," Dalyea says — and The Beatles; "I always loved Ringo, but at 16 I couldn't identify any stronger with John Lennon," she adds.

For three months following Lennon's assassination in December 1980, the shaggy pop music icon visited Dalyea in dreams. Every night the two of them sat peacefully across from one another at a long table somewhere deep in her mind, sipping coffee, smoking cigarettes and talking about art till sunrise.

Poet, painter, freedom fighter and musician, Dalyea moved here from L.A. 12 years ago, "just to get away."

When she arrived in Eugene, Dalyea looked around and said to herself: "This is gonna be just like L.A. in 30 years."

Sellouts call it good after covering their Toyota Priuses in bumper stickers that read "Keep Eugene Weird." Dalyea, however, takes the fight to the streets.

Dalyea, who calls herself "h2o UFO," trucks along, oblivious to the heft of her luggage, because she's on a mission of grave personal significance. Eugene needs Dalyea now more than ever to keep it real and protect it from those who wish to buy it up cheap and sell it away for parts.

She may be tilting at windmills or she may be the only thing preventing Eugene's own personal Ragnarök. Nobody knows.

She says the cops don't hassle her much, but the Red Caps give her a hard time about the noise, which, frankly, is barely audible on a busy day in downtown Eugene.

Hey, Red Caps, leave Karen Dalyea alone!



PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

BEST EUGENE STEREOTYPE

You see him everywhere in Eugene: a lardy, milquetoast cross between Ned Flanders and Smeagol, he is most commonly sighted in liberal strongholds like Market of Choice or Saturday Market, where he saunters among crowds of like-minded progressives with his placid, smug smile and vapid eyes, surveying all that he approves. A senior citizen of the indubitably Caucasian persuasion, his prototypical garb runs in earth tones (khaki pants, open-toed sandals, Patagonia fleece) but his defining plumage is the Greek fisherman's cap he wears at a jaunty tilt atop his balding head (sometimes with graying wisp of a ponytail protruding behind).

This is "The Skipper" (*Homo flaccidus*), a version of aging hippie endemic to Eugene. Despite his benevolent, avuncular appearance, this wily creature is not to be trusted: He is the bourgeois ancestor of the evil slummers that invaded Haight-Ashbury in '69, and his intentions are dishonest and purely vampiric. A classic poseur, The Skipper rides the vibe of progressive causes like a shark, seeking his advantage in

a manner that would shame God himself.

Peer long enough into the seasick visage of this boatless captain, and you will see the kind of pornographic, cowardly egotism that drives all peddlers of spiritual snake oil. Forever avoiding confrontations of any kind, what allows The Skipper to thrive in a touchy-feely place like Eugene is his facade of niceness, which is commonly mistaken for good intentions. The Skipper does not have good intentions: He is a hypocrite through and through, a rich man in poor man's garb, and his appetites are venal (many skippers are also swingers) and driven by good-old greed and selfish advancement.

From a singularly Darwinist perspective, it's hard not to admire The Skipper's chameleon-like (or perhaps cockroach-like) genius for making do: In his faux-adherence to progressive politics, he has melded the Age of Aquarius to the Age of Trump, and his long-term prospects for survival are as high as his tax-status bracket and the mileage on his Prius.



ILLUSTRATION BY TRASK BEDORTHA

Fig. 69