



Portland art show comes east/3C



A flavorful marinade for pork chops/4C



Museum opens marijuana exhibit/4C



The Mike King ‘aesthetic’ rocks Pendleton’s art center

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Mike King made his first concert posters as a high schooler in 1979 to see local punk bands in his hometown of Portland. Nearly four decades later, King has created more than 1,000 gig posters, not to mention designs for album covers, T-shirts and more.

“I made it because someone had to, and I kept making it because I could,” King said. “And here I am.”

King’s work spans struggling Oregon artists to the biggest groups on the world stage. And the Pendleton Center of the Arts opened an exhibition Thursday displaying 50 of King’s silk-screened posters. The show in the center’s East Oregonian Gallery runs through July 30 and admission is free.

King said during a recent phone interview he won’t be able to make the trip from his new home and studio in New York City but is not caught up in how people display the work anyway. Though he rather hopes they don’t put a bunch of holes in the posters.

“I will provide the lumber,” he said, “and they will make the house out of it.”

King also hedged on calling what he makes “art,” but the Experience Music Project in Seattle, the Bold Hype Gallery in New York and Gallery1988 in Los Angeles show his work. He makes at least 100 concert posters a year, he said, mostly of the “telephone pole” variety, as well as a number of limited edition screen prints. Those are available at \$35 a pop, putting them in the price range of a lot of folks. And “Maximum Plunder: The Poster Art of Mike King,” a 280-page retrospective of his posters, is out this summer.

King’s posters often feature recurring elements or themes, including perspective and vertical representations from teepees to skyscrapers to rockets. He also has a lot of posters with people falling, he said, but left the “why” to interpretation.



King

“Believe it or not, I try to avoid a style,” King said. “I work more from an aesthetic than a style.”

Good concert posters, he said, are posters people can read and know what something is about.

“I don’t buy into the sort of ’60s psychedelic idea that if you’re in the know, you know what it says. I think that’s bull****,” he said. “Anytime you forget that, you lose the plot.”

The natural response to making concert posters is to use big letters, he said, but there are ways to “coax type and imagery” into interesting and intriguing shapes while being perfectly legible.

“That’s what I’m always aiming for,” he said.

But his mileage on that varies.

“Concert posters are a constant time crunch,” King said. “There’s always a deadline and you got to get them done. Some of them come out better than others.”

He also does not go out of his way to listen to the music of a group or artist he is designing for.

“If I don’t like their music, I don’t want that to get in the way,” he said.

Rather, how a band represents itself on its website or other material can provide insight and ideas, he said, but the influence for his design is everywhere. The world through every possible medium presents us with imagery, he said, from natural beauty to Korean tacos, and all of that is there to make something with.

“I’m a collage-ist,” King said. “Art and culture at this point chops stuff up and reconstitutes it into the new or perceived as new. ... That’s kind of what I do — chop stuff up and put it back together.”

“Hopefully,” he said, “it’s as tasty as a Korean taco.”

You can get a taste of King’s work at the Pendleton arts center at 214 N. Main St., Pendleton, and online at

www.crashamerica.com and www.crowdsupply.com/mike-king/maximum-plunder.

