

Homegrown tunes of Eastern Oregon

It's difficult to watch national entertainment industry award shows without feeling a sense of detachment. What do these celebrities, that we'll only experience through the filter of mass media, have to do with our day-to-day existence in the Eastern Oregon?

The Grammy Awards, a self-congratulatory promotion event for the corporate music industry, aside from providing a nationally shared experience that we can all discuss ("Oh my God! Did you see CeeLo Green's outfit!") is largely irrelevant to what is happening on the ground in Eastern Oregon, where a steady raft of musicians are pumping out recorded documents of their original music, which will largely go unnoticed outside these quarters. I wouldn't advocate that there be an "Eastern Oregon Music Awards" in order to correct this — that would transform something authentic and local into a gross mimicry of corporate entertainment — but there are local recordings that are identifiably "Eastern Oregon" in flavor that are worth listening to in addition to (or even in lieu of) the new Beyonce or Adele album; records that contribute to a cohesive cultural identity of our area.

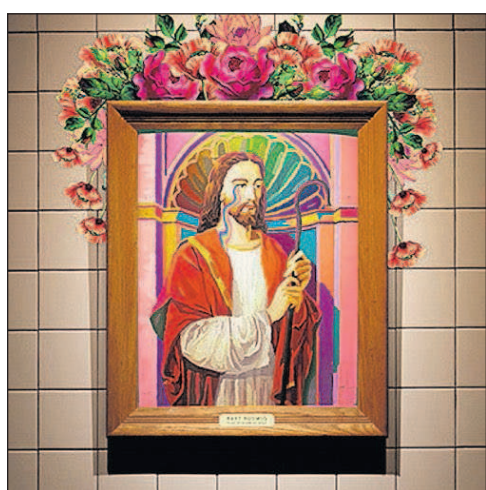
Here are a few local records of note from the first few months of 2017:

Bart Budwig — "Paint By Numbers Jesus"

Country singer-songwriter Bart Budwig of Enterprise will offer up an exclusively online release of his new album, "Paint by Numbers Jesus," on April 1 (no fooling). Budwig has subtitled the album "A Concept Record" as it revolves around the theme of losing faith in the religion one is born into and contemplating how to fill that spiritual void.



J.D. KINDLE
Comment



Paint By Numbers Jesus by Bart Budwig

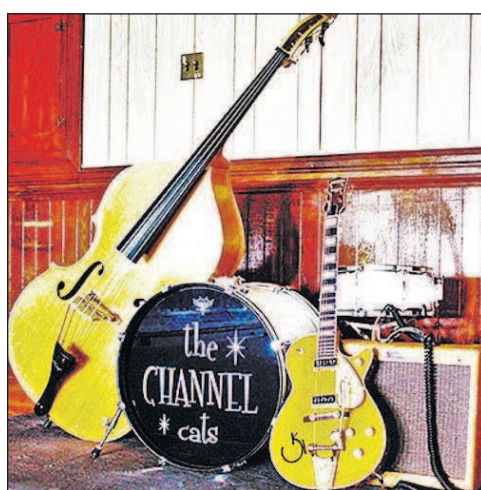
One would think that such a weighty concept would produce a dour, melancholic recording, but "Paint by Numbers Jesus" is a largely up-tempo and joyous affair. The danceable number "Goliath Got Stoned" features a peppy horn section and R'n'B guitars while the thematic "Age of Reason" is reminiscent of church camp singalongs.

In the tradition of country concept albums, "Paint by Numbers Jesus" includes covers of many other songwriters' work that fits within the theme. Jeff Tweedy's song "You Are Not Alone," written for Mavis Staples, produces one of the rare somber moments on the album while Tom Waits' "Chocolate Jesus" and Bobby Bare's "Drop Kick Me Jesus" provide some comic relief.

"Paint by Numbers Jesus" is undoubtedly Budwig's most mature and developed album so far and it will be exciting to hear where he goes to next. Find it at: soundcloud.com/bart-budwig

The Channel Cats — self titled

The Channel Cats, who recorded, mixed and mastered their self-titled debut effort in Baker City, claim that the album



The Channel Cats - self titled

was a year in the making. Listening to the amalgamation of influences, it sounds like it took much longer than that. Extracting elements from the vocabulary of rockabilly, western swing, country and surf, the power trio belongs to the lineage of Ameripolitan retro acts like Chris Isaak and Wayne "The Train" Hancock, who deliberately draw from decades of American music.

Guitarist and singer Andy Zikmund's tasteful guitar licks dominate much of the album's mix while bassist Loran Joseph and drummer Tom Barger provide a solid rhythm section. With an album finally under their belts, hopefully The Channel Cats will start performing outside of Baker County where they are mainstays. Find them at: thechannelcats.com

The Moon on Drugs — "Alphabeautiful"

The album cover image for "Alphabeautiful" — a grainy and pixelated digital photo of a grey, foggy Eastern Oregon morning in the winter — conveys the music within: bleak, hazy and digitally distorted. It only fails to highlight humorous undertones that are present on each track.



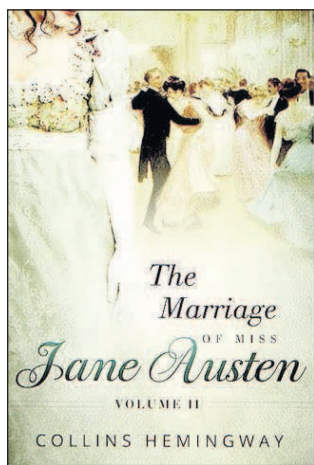
Alphabeautiful by The Moon on Drugs

Comprised of nine dreamy sonic vignettes (it's hard to classify the tracks as songs as they don't adhere to traditional strophic song structures), "Alphabeautiful" explores a weird synthesis of electronic drum beats mixed with crudely recorded live drums, heavy processed vocal samples, crunchy guitars, and squealing synthesizers.

The Moon on Drugs' debut recording is just the latest release by the Pendleton-based recording artist Austin Burt (his previous aliases include Post Goth Death Shoegaze and Mosey Oakes) whose discography is scattered about the internet. It's yet to be seen whether The Moon on Drugs is a one-off project or will blossom into something more sustained. Whatever the case, "Alphabeautiful" is a good album to rub the sleep out of your eyes to this season. Find it at: themoonondrugs.bandcamp.com

James Dean Kindle is a Pendleton musician and executive director of the Oregon East Symphony. Contact him at jamesdeankindle@gmail.com.

BOOK REVIEW



Cover photo courtesy Collins Hemingway

Austen's 'lost years' explored in second installment

Readers who enjoyed Collins Hemingway's "The Marriage of Miss Jane Austen" now have a second installment of his fictional account of her life.

Volume II of Hemingway's series, exploring what Austen's life might have been if she had married, continues with Jane and Ashton's deepening involvement in the fight over slavery, Jane's struggle to win the respect of her mother-in-law and the staff at the Dennis family home, and anticipation of their first child's birth. Along the way, a clash of values threatens to derail business ventures and destroy long-held friendships.

Jane and Ashton, intelligent, passionate about their views and devoted to each other, struggle to find their place in an early 19th century English society in the throes of war with France and coming to terms with the repercussions of the Industrial Revolution. Where Jane's world view expanded in the first volume of the series, Volume II finds her turning inward again as class distinctions and gender roles threaten to upend her tranquil life.

Hemingway weaves his fictional account of Jane's lost years into the historical facts so skillfully it's almost like he was there to document it first-hand.

"The Marriage of Miss Jane Austen: Volume II," by Collins Hemingway. © 2016.

Renee Struthers is the records editor and book reviewer for the East Oregonian. Contact her at rstruthers@eastoregonian.com

Want to get your event listed in our calendar? Send information to community@eastoregonian.com, or c/o Tammy Malgesini, 333 E. Main Street, Hermiston, OR, 97838.

Festivals

Spirit of the West Cowboy Gathering

•Feb. 17-19
•Ellensburg, Washington, various venues
www.ellensburgcowboygathering.com

\$90/weekend pass, \$35-\$55/individual days, free/downtown venues & open mics. A whole host of cowboy fun — poets, Dutch oven cooking, vendors, fiddle contests, demonstrations and free kids' activities. Musicians include Barbara Nelson of Pendleton, 2012 Academy of Western Artists' Will Rogers Cowboy Award winner, and main stage performers Waddie Mitchell, Juni Fisher, Horse Crazy Cowgirl Band and the Cowboy Celtic Band.

Echo Red 2 Red XC

•March 3-4
•Intersection Main/Dupont streets, Echo
www.echored2red.com
\$45/adults, \$20/youths. In its ninth year, riders start and finish in downtown Echo. Includes all ages and skill levels with awards and a raffle after the race.

Art, Museums

Photography Club Exhibit

•Monday-Thursdays; 11 a.m.-7 p.m.
•Friday-Saturdays; 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
•Hermiston Public Library, 235 E. Gladys Ave.
www.hermistonlibrary.us
Free. Best photos from past year by club members on display.

Laura Ahola-Young exhibit

•Monday-Thursdays, 9:30

a.m.-1:30 p.m.

•Betty Feves Memorial Gallery, BMCC, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton.

Free. Opens Thursday, Feb. 16. Features paintings by Idaho State University art professor. Ahola-Young will attend a closing reception March 16 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Gallery also open by appointment by calling 541-278-5952. Runs through March 16.

Eastern Oregon Regional High School Exhibit

•Friday, Feb. 24; 6 p.m., opens
•Monday-Fridays; 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

•Nightingale Gallery, Loso Hall •Eastern Oregon University, La Grande
www.eou.edu/art

Free. Features talented high school artists from across the region. The open reception is free and open to the public. It will include award presentations. Runs through March 21.

"The Path of Totality"

•Monday, April 3; 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m., art accepted
•Friday, April 7; 5:30-8 p.m., opening reception
•Crossroads Carnegie Art Center, 2020 Auburn St., Baker City
www.crossroads-arts.org

\$15/members, \$20/non-members. Up to three pieces accepted by amateur and professional artists depicting the theme inspired by the upcoming Aug. 21 total solar eclipse. Show and sale runs April 7-29.

Music

Rock Bot

•Saturday, Feb. 18; 8 p.m. No cover

WHAT TO DO

•Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission

Live Music Thursday

•Thursdays 7-9 p.m. No cover

•40 Taps, 337 S.W. Emigrant Ave., Pendleton

Coyote Kings

•Friday, Feb. 24; 6-8 p.m. No cover

•Nookie's/Hermiston Brewing Co., 125 N. First St., Hermiston

Rock n' Roll Cowboys

•Friday, Feb. 24; Saturday, Feb. 25; 8 p.m. No cover

•Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission

Justin Shandor-Elvis tribute artist

•Thursday, March 9, Friday, March 10; 7:30 p.m.

•Rivers Event Center, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission

www.wildhorseresort.com
\$39.99/platinum, \$29.99/premium, \$24.99/general. Features top Elvis impersonator during the 22nd anniversary celebration at the casino. 21 and older.

Wasteland Kings

•Friday, March 10; 6-9 p.m. No cover.

•Nookie's/Hermiston Brewing Co., 125 N. First St., Hermiston

Jamie & Luke

•Friday, March 31; 6:30 p.m. No cover

•Sno Road Winery, 111 W. Main St., Echo

Night life

Mardi Gras Party

•Saturday, Feb. 18; 9 p.m.

•The Pheasant, 149 E. Main

St., Hermiston

No cover. Beads, masks and dancing to DJ Dang. Drink specials and prize for best costume.

Whiskey Wednesday Game Night

•Wednesdays; 3-7 p.m.

•The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

No cover. Xbox 360, Nintendo Wii, PlayStation 3 and Nintendo 64.

LOL Comedy Jam

•Thursdays; 8 p.m.

•Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission.

No cover. Feb. 23: Gary Jones, Huck Flynn

Mac's Trivia Night

•First Thursday of month, 8 p.m. No cover

•Mac's Bar & Grill, 1400 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton

21 and older. East. Drink. Think. Teams of 2-8 compete in trivia contest with other teams. Live host and prizes.

Wine tasting

•Fridays, 4-8 p.m.

•Sno Road Winery, 111 W. Main St., Echo.

Open Mic

•First/Third Friday each month, 8 p.m.-midnight

•The Packard Tavern, 118 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

www.facebook.com/groups/pendletonopenmic

Battle of the Bars

•Friday, March 3; 6-11 p.m.

•Let'er Buck Room, Pendleton Round-Up Grounds

No cover. Features bartenders from nine local watering holes who are vying for Best of West title with signature drinks containing Pendleton Whiskey. Voting

is by purchases of drinks. Food available for purchase.

Theater & film

"Til Death Do We Part ... And We Part Tonight"

•Sunday, Feb. 19; 2 p.m.

•Agape House, 500 Harper Road, Hermiston

\$15/person. Murder mystery dessert fundraiser for Agape House. Call 541-567-8774 for tickets.

"Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat"

•Feb. 23-25 & March 2-4; 7:30 p.m.

•Feb. 26 & March 5; 2 p.m.

•BMCC Bob Clapp Theatre, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton

Feb. 23 is pay-what-you-can preview night; other performances, \$20/adults, \$10/students. The musical is presented by College Community Theatre.

"RENT" 20th Anniversary Tour

•Monday, Feb. 27; 7 p.m.

•Toyota Center, Kennewick

www.yourtoyotacenter.com
\$37-\$82 (tickets via www.ticketmaster.com). The Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning rock musical follows an unforgettable year in the lives of seven artists struggling to follow their dreams without selling out.

"Fiddler on the Roof"

•March 3-4, 10-11; 7 p.m.

•Hermiston High School, 600 S. First St., Hermiston.

\$10/adults, \$6/youths & seniors citizens. Hermiston High school drama and music students present the popular musical.

Making 'Portlandia': Brainstorming, basketball and improv

By LYNN ELBER
APT Television Writer

LOS ANGELES — The "Portlandia" brain trust is gathered to hash out another round of endearingly goofy tales set in a mythical (sort of) Portland.

Laptops dot the conference table where stars Carrie Brownstein and Fred Armisen sit with fellow writers of the IFC comedy. Their modest office is in a gentrifying industrial section of Los Angeles with the whimsical nickname Frog-town — so perfectly "Portlandia," now in its seventh and next-to-last season.

The story currently under discussion: What the mayor's wish to secede from the United States could mean for the Oregon city (see the result at 10 p.m. EST Thursday, with Kyle MacLachlan back as the mayor and Kumail Nanjiani as an unyielding bureaucrat). "I just want more Saturday and Sunday. Two each," one writer suggests as the mayor's vague intent.

"He keeps saying, 'I just want the weekend.'" And Fred and Carrie are like, "What does that mean?" another scribe chimes in.

"Shorts. Flip-flops. Eating a banana on the front lawn," is helpfully offered.

This group stream of consciousness meanders delightfully on. The mayor



This 2015 photo shows Fred Armisen, right, with co-star Carrie Brownstein, left, during the filming of their series, "Portlandia," in Portland.

wants to set up a tax shelter to attract billionaires. Or maybe he went to Iceland and realized countries outside America are OK, too.

But what about the downside of secession? Portland's split from the U.S. would be treated like a cable customer trying to end a contract, and it wouldn't be pretty. There are the penalty fees, of course, and demands for return of federal equipment including flagpoles and court gavels.

And how would a Portlander cross the border to see, say, a Beyonce concert? Would a passport be required?

Most TV writers' rooms feel like creative conspiracies, but this one even more

Live" cast member Armisen, himself a musician, are long-time friends.

Also on hand this day for idea-swapping and a lunchtime game of basketball — an outside hoop is the big perk — are writers Alice Mathias, Graham Wagner and Karen Kilgariff. But the script that emerges is only the beginning of what viewers ultimately see, a "loose blueprint" for filming in Portland, as Krisel puts it.

"The shooting becomes our rewriting ... because it's so heavily improvised," he said in an interview. "And that's kind of the secret of the show, that once you've got this simple premise and you've brainstormed it and written it, then on the day (of taping) you can just have fun with it."

He compares the show to an art project, such as a painting or sculpture, which ultimately finds its own final shape.

"You don't try to micromanage it," Krisel said. Except, it seems, in the editing room, where the goal is to cobble together the very best, "laugh-out-loud funny moments" out of the many takes done for each segment. That can even require a "Portlandia" version of computer-generated special effects, such as moving coffee cups around to preserve continuity.

"The end goal is to make

a piece that everybody has ownership over and everybody's proud of because everybody contributed to it. I think there's a communist, socialist vibe to 'Portlandia' to make it work," Krisel said, with a laugh.

The comedy does revel in its own brand of leftiness. Brownstein once compared Portland itself to "more a mind-set than a place," telling The Associated Press in a 2014 interview that it's "an exemplary city in how befuddled it can sometimes be by its own attempts at progressiveness and kindness."

For Krisel, the flaws-and-all depiction in "Portlandia," although affectionate, led to a brief crisis of confidence after the presidential election.

"We were making fun of ourselves and we thought it was funny, and the world was, 'Actually, we hate those people,'" he recalled thinking. He felt an urge to protect "Portlandia" by halting it, but decided instead to stick with what he calls "just a funny show."

"It's like candy to watch. People have said they're going through something difficult and they put on 'Portlandia' and it's a breath of fresh air," he said. "Sometimes the world is so scary, as it is now, and you just need something to make you laugh."