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Q. Because of what happened last year with the Black Lives Matter movement, and with Black History Month here, do things feel any different now because of that? Does it feel like people are paying more attention?

A. Oh, absolutely. I think they're being more aware and they're learning more and they're associating themselves now with being knowledgeable and conscious. There's a huge wave of awareness going, and I've had personal chats with friends. ... When everything was super heated and all the protests were going on, and I was still on the road driving, I would make it a point to avoid major cities driving my bus through. I always liked the small towns anyways, but I never made a big deal out of it on a personal basis because of the way I see the world and how I relate to any people of color, or noncolor. Asians and Blacks and Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, I've always come from that unified, hippy kind of stance. But I'm definitely feeling the change, being treated — being asked about how I am and how I'm doing, people going out of their way to say hi and being courteous and not looking over at me when I'm going to the store to buy something, or walking down the street and someone else is crossing the street because they don't want to pass me on the same side of the sidewalk.

"NEBLAR," MAXWELL FRIEDMAN GROUP

Hammond artist Maxwell Friedman has been a fixture on Bend's music scene for



Tony Dellacioppa/Submitted photo

Bend-based, 17-year-old Hammond artist Maxwell Friedman leads soul/funk/jazz/fusion band The Maxwell Friedman Group.

many years. The 17-year-old composer and keyboardist has spent the pandemic playing solo streaming shows and working on new material on his own and for his eponymous band. The four-piece funk/jazz/soul/fusion group will perform the next Soul Funktion Entertainment streaming show from Midtown Ballroom on Feb. 12; visit soulfunktionentertainment.com for more

information.

"Neblar" is from the Maxwell Friedman Group's debut live album, "Beyond Neblar," released in 2019.

Q. What are your thoughts on Black History Month in general and the tokenism feel to it that can be there?

A. I think the issues with tokenization, at least my interpretation of tokenization, come from just representation of minority groups in certain ways without really consulting them for their own perspective. Like someone else basically limiting the voice and replacing it with their interpretation of what they feel needs to be addressed. So I think talking to (Black, Indigenous and people of color) and specifically Black people about Black History Month is actually really crucial. ... That's the biggest thing for me about Black History Month. Being a Black teen in public school in Bend is not having a lot of representation. I'd at least want, for the one period of time where we talk about the people (who are my ancestors, I want it to be accurate; I don't want it to be whitewashed. I want it to be the truth, and I want people to really understand all the contributions, all the progressions into the future that Black people have contributed to society, and then everything, all the adversities they've had to face.

Q. Talking about Black contributions to American history, I think a big one that comes up that is in both of our wheelhouses is music, popular music. I can't think of a single form of popular music in the United States that isn't influenced or directly inspired by Black America.

A. Exactly. I think that's one of the biggest reasons I'm a jazz musician, is because I live in a place where there aren't a lot of people that look like me. I don't have a lot of experiences with that side of my culture, so a great way to connect with that is by playing jazz music, by playing R&B and hip-hop music, by playing gospel music, by surrounding myself

More Black History Month listening from Bend artists:

"No More," Jeshua Marshall

"Great Again," Kourtnei

"It Ain't Right," MC Ragtop

with the art forms created by African American people in this country and really learning them and respecting them. I think that helps me really get in touch with that side of our culture, and that's the second big thing about Black History Month. As a musician, I'm always trying to remind people, "Hey, you listen to this music? Well this is where it came from."

"JUST LIKE THEM," MOSLEY WOTTA

Bend poet, rapper, visual artist and writer MOSLEY WOTTA has stayed busy as usual during the pandemic, releasing a slew of new music including the album, "This is (Not) All There Is," and single "Head On." As the year progresses, expect more music through WOTTA's new label, Wake Records, as well as a multimedia streaming show, "Basic," which will be filmed later this month.

"Just Like Them," the lead track from "This is (Not) All There Is," was recently made into a video featuring animation by Wotta. The video was featured in NPR's "Heavy Rotation" column last month.

Q. What are your thoughts on Black History Month in general and the tokenism that can come into that?

A. In a town like this, tokenism is going to be inevitable until it isn't. Any way to try to lift up people who have been oppressed by people who have been oppressing is inherently flawed, but is also part of the work that needs to be done. ... There's a growing willingness to lean into discomfort as a daily practice rather than a trend. We're seeing substantive changes in superficial ways that are going to translate to core infrastructural changes, so far in as we have (a majority of) women for our city council, which has never happened before, which is a good indication of trying something different. And I'm more keen to be curious about this town than I am to condemn it personally, but I don't think that's unique to me. I do think more and more folks are wondering about what possible outcomes could come from the mistakes that we've made, the missteps that we've made, as a way to get our footing moving forward. And that is very hopeful.

Q. With everything that happened last year with Black Lives Matter coming to the forefront, are you noticing anything around that with Black History Month?

A. If you believe that your ethical practice and investigation is ever over, then you are an extremely dangerous community member. If you believe that you can celebrate Black lives during a protest or during a particular month, if you think that it starts and stops with Black lives — if this is an investigation into our relationship well beyond how we per-

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