

OMNI



OREGON MUSIC NEWS: THE STATE'S ONLY ALL-GENRE MUSIC MAGAZINE

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years since
the world
has heard
music from
Fernando
Viciconte*

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THE FRONT ROW

FROM THE MANAGEMENT

At long last, a new website for readers

By Tom D'Antoni, Editor-in-Chief

Ever go to the OMN website and find it hard to load, or even find the site to be down? Annoying. Harsh.

We've been suffering with an old, creaky, out-of-date OMN website for a couple of years. It makes me want to pull my hair out.

On Monday, October 19, that will all be over and the new site will be up.

Honestly, if, as a fan, I had found the OMN site to be cranky, I would have abandoned it. We're grateful to those loyal OMN readers who have not. You regulars will be happy when you find how much easier and more fun it is to explore the new site.

If you have stopped coming to OMN on the Internet, we invite you to return on the 19th and rediscover.

Has the mission changed? Not really. The hard lesson we have learned is that we can't cover all that we'd like to cover. One of my most frustrating moments is when I open my email box for the first time every day and see the dozens and dozens of promotional emails I've gotten and know that we are able to only cover a small percentage of them.

Even more frustrating is when I go to the post office box and find an album by one of our friends and neighbors and know the creative energy, time, effort and money that went into getting it to us, and then to, many times, know that we'll never be able to do anything on it.

It hurts us (me) to realize that sad fact. We do what we can, sometimes pushing our own psychic and physical and spiritual limits to the edge.

One thing we won't have to worry about anymore is whether the goddamned site will work.

It will.

Give it a try.



Screen shot of the new OMN website in its development phase.

OMN

The mission of Oregon Music News (OMN) is to grow and sustain Oregon's music community by providing an all-genre music platform for comprehensive online and print music journalism.

OMN develops writers, photographers and digital media producers of all experience levels – driven by a passion for music and a commitment to journalistic integrity.

Since its inception in 2009, OMN has strived to:

- Provide training and mentorship for new writers and photojournalists
- Provide a vehicle for established writers/photographers to have their work published/syndicated
- Introduce and promote local artists through coverage in OMN
- Inform community about music events
- Impact local youth music programs through awareness and giving

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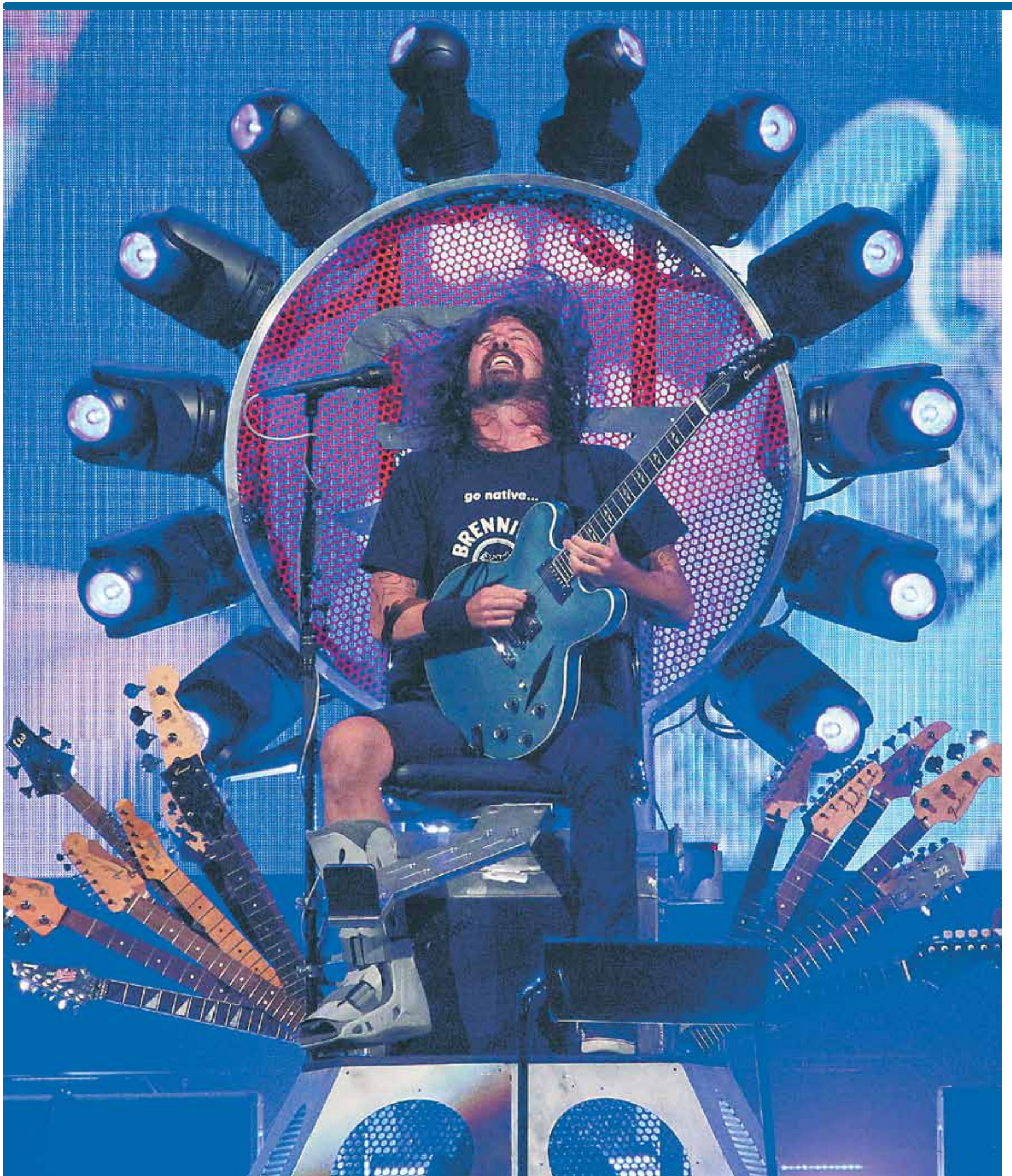
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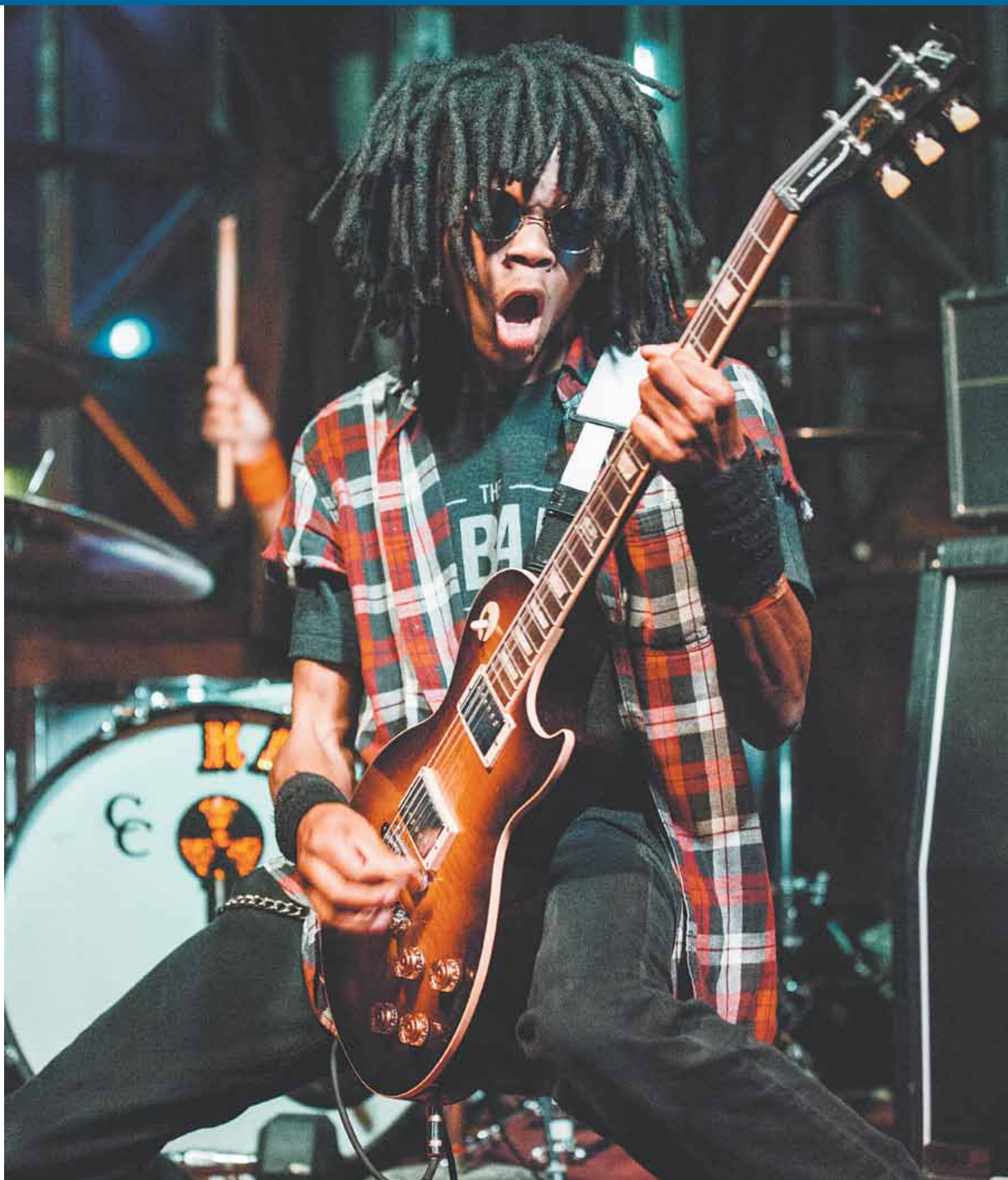
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Foo Fighter's frontman Dave Grohl jams out on his custom built throne at the MODA Center, Sept. 14, 2015. Grohl broke his leg during a concert in June. // Photo by Jon T. Cruz

THE FRONT ROW



FERNANDO FINDS HIS VOICE



Photo by Chad Lanning

BY ANA AMMANN

It's been four years since the world has heard music from the Argentine born, Portland-based rocker Fernando Viconte. Had it not been for a bout of pneumonia in 2012 that led to a long-term, previously undiagnosed serious stomach disorder, the world might never have heard him sing again.

He came to this country from Buenos Aires in 1971 at the age of two with his parents who, like many at that time, were seeking a better life for their family. They didn't speak English and didn't have their papers. For 10 years, Fernando and his family lived as illegal immigrants seeking legal status, but their attempts were thwarted in the post-Vietnam era. At the age of 12, he became

a resident alien, his father found success as the owner of an auto body shop in Southern California's San Fernando Valley, and he began to cut his musical teeth in school in Canoga Park. From there life took on an accelerated pace — a major label deal, touring, marriage, divorce and drug addiction.

How did you make your way to the Northwest?

I was in a band in Los Angeles called Monkey Paw and we had a development deal with A&M records in 1991. And this is so cliché, the guy that signed us went to another label so we got dropped. I had been married at 23, divorced by 24, and was now being dropped from the label. I had been addicted to cocaine for three years and did the whole Rock 'n' Roll thing, touring non-stop, and it destroyed my marriage. I was in pretty bad shape

when friends of mine from the band Gern Blanton on Cavity Search Records came to visit me while they were on tour. They said, "You've got to get out of here." I realized I would probably end up dying if I stayed. So, when a friend invited me to Portland, I liked it. I packed up my bags and went. My friends let me stay with them the first few months, that's how I got on my feet, got clean, and changed my life around.

You have quite a rich life history up through your 20s, starting with your family uprooting and leaving Argentina for the U.S., through to the time you landed in Portland. How did those experiences make their way into your music thematically?

FERNANDO *continued on page 8*



Fernando Viciconte playing with Peter Buck, lead guitarist and co-founder of R.E.M. // Photo by Chad Lanning

FERNANDO

continued from page 7

that you can't say what your status is in this country because you might be deported, you live under a permanent fear. You are an outsider looking in at the world and you don't feel like you belong. There are a lot of themes I touch upon, be it religion, politics or just sociological things in my music that look at it from that perspective — from someone outside looking in — so it definitely had an impact on me.

Fast forward to today, you've just released your 7th album. How do the themes in your new album compare with what you have written about in prior efforts?

There is definitely a theme that runs through the

When you're told from a very young age

new record and it is human connection. The name, *Leave The Radio On*, is a metaphor for leaving that connection open between human beings. Without getting too existential or anything, it starts the record out with someone that has kind of lost faith in humanity or his own spiritually and feels a disconnect. Throughout the course of the record, it deals with different aspects of that connection being lost, be it with a lover or a friend, a regret, youth, growing up...

"Kingdom Come" deals with getting older and looking back at your youth and finding in yourself that you've lost that wide eyed wonder looking at the world. A lot of the themes follow that arc throughout the record, starting from a pessimistic view and arcing by the end of the record when it ends with "Leave The Radio On." It's someone releasing that

kind of mortal coil and looking at it from another perspective and finally realizing that through all the hardships that we see in our life, there is a connection with everyone, and that is what makes this existence special.

It's been several years since your last album, what in your life has changed since?

Since the last record, the major thing that changed is that I had major stomach operation two years ago. Over 10 years ago I started having severe stomach pains and consequently had severe throat problems associated with the acid reflux and all these other problems coming from that. I had a hiatal hernia, which keeps your stomach open the entire time, all that hydrochloric acid seeps into your esophagus.

In 2001 I stopped touring because I couldn't do it without losing my voice. Doctors had no idea what it was. About three years ago I had pneumonia, which is one of the symptoms that happens to people when they have constant acid reflux because when you are sleeping you aspirate the hydrochloric acid and it damages your lung tissue.

I ended up in the hospital and they did an x-ray to check out the pneumonia and they saw a spot on my lungs. This hernia was so big they could see it sticking into the chest cavity, and finally realized that was the root of my problem. So I went to OHSU for an operation. It took seven months to recover from it. I lost 35 pounds in five weeks because I was on an all liquid diet, so it was pretty drastic. But from the second I had the surgery, I could tell the pain was gone.

It took a year to get back into it. I had been a property tax accountant for the last nine years I couldn't play. I quit my job and just started touring again. I just finished my seventh tour in the last year. It's been great ever since the surgery — a life changer.

People remark most about your incredible voice. Have you noticed it is easier to sing, or other changes since the surgery?

Definitely. I used to wake up every day with a burning sore throat. I knew years ago my situation was uncommon. Two to three weeks on the road... very difficult to keep a pure voice under most circumstances, but since the surgery, my range has gone up and I can sing a lot easier than I used to.

What was the impetus for embarking on a new album?

I started writing the album about four years ago, when I was still going through these health issues. I had stopped playing, and I was out at a club and I met Peter Buck there, and he asked what was going on with me not playing anymore. He offered to play on my new record if I would go into the studio. He just wanted to get me back in the studio to make another record. So, of course, you know, when Peter Buck asks to do something on your record... I responded [laughing], "Ok, I've got a great record ready!" And I decided I better start working on this, so that began the process of me woodshedding.

What is your songwriting process like?

There is never a set way that I do anything. It has started with lyrics, but I'm more comfortable strumming a guitar and coming up with a melody than writing down the lyrics initially. On this record there was a bit of both of those things, not thinking about what the themes would be, just thinking about a certain emotion, and just letting it go, and then editing the lyrical content later.

I did a lot of four tracking where I wasn't thinking about what the song structure was or what was going on thematically or lyrically, I was just kind of going for it subconsciously, letting words come out and maybe thinking a certain feeling or direction I wanted to go to, but not really trying to get the lyrics

"I used to wake up every day with a burning sore throat. I knew years ago my situation was uncommon. Two to three weeks on the road... very difficult to keep a pure voice under most circumstances, but since the surgery, my range has gone up and I can sing a lot easier than I used to."

before I recorded the song.

What I didn't even realize was that I had maybe 30-40 sketches of songs. I didn't even know I had a record until a buddy of mine named Russell came to visit me and asked if I had been working on anything. I said, "Not really, just messing around." And he asked if he could listen to some of the tapes that I had four tracked and started asking, "Well what about this song?" "This one is pretty good," or "This sounds like a song." Ultimately, playing the songs back to me and encouraging me made me go back into those songs to edit them a bit and work on lyrics, and work on the kernel for the first 15 we were going to put on the record.

There are quite a few notable collaborators you've got on the album.

There are a total of 15 guests on the record. It's like a basketball team! Peter Buck from REM is on eight of the tracks; Scott McCaughey, who plays in Young Fresh Fellows and also played in REM is featured on 7 tracks; Mike Coykendall, a great singer songwriter who has worked with M. Ward and Blitzen Trapper; my buddy Scott McPherson is on there, he played in Elliott Smith's band and is in M. Ward's band. Basically everyone except Willy from Richmond Fontaine is on the record. Luther Russell, a great old friend of mine who produced my *Old Man Motel* and *Pacoima* records.

What's the greatest compliment someone has given you about your music?

I met a gentleman on one of my tours who had been suffering from cancer in the hospital. Someone had given him one of my records, *Widow*, from 1997. There is a song on it called "Beautiful," and he said he would just keep playing that song. The feeling it gave him, it meant so much to him; he attributes it with him getting over his cancer. You can't get a bigger compliment than that: someone saying your music helped save of their life. More than any review or anything, that touched me to the point of tears.

You know you make a record, you send it out there, and hope for the best. Now through Facebook I get more feedback than I used to, but in general you don't see people face to face when they are describing your music.

Is there a particular song on the album that is near and dear to your heart? Or do they all feel like your children and you love them all equally?

You always love the record you just made most. I think the theme of the record and the title track "Leave The Radio On" sums up a lot of my feelings about our existence: how I feel about it and that we are all kind of tied together. It takes a record that is pretty dark in a lot of tones, and ends it by going towards the light on a happier note — not that it's a happy song, but it has a positive message — probably the most positive on the record, and I like that it leaves people with that to go out on.

What sort of impact do you want your music to make as you put it out in the world?

I want it to be a reminder that we are on this Earth for a short amount of time. I've gone through the loss of many close friends. In the past year I have lost three. In the last five years I have lost ten friends. We tend to think we are going to be here forever and that we are going to see that person we love tomorrow. Like "Burned Out Love" on the record, where you have someone that you love and appreciate, but something comes between you at a certain point in your life and you never face it. One day they pass away, or there is an accident and they are gone from your life, or they just move away and you never see them again — you never have that chance to reconcile with that person.

Overall, that's what I want people to take from this record. This life is very short and we need to appreciate it and we need to appreciate each other because that is what makes it worth living: our connection to each other. [OMN]

Liner Notes

Fernando will be touring the US through the end of 2015, and will embark on European Tours in early February and April of 2016.

- Oct 16 Boon's Treasury, Salem
- Oct 17 River City Saloon, Hood River
- Oct 23 Conor Byrne Tavern, Ballard, WA
- Oct 30 Fernando Duo at Hotel Oregon, McMinville

● Oct 31 Rock Creek Tavern, Portland (Halloween Show!) 9 to 12pm FREE

Leave The Radio On is available now on LP, CD and digital formats. Look for it at your favorite record store, on iTunes, Amazon, Spotify or get it directly from Fluff and Gravy Records.



Call him “Neutron,” Bootsy Collins does



Photo courtesy Farnell Newton

Portland trumpeter/producer Farnell Newton has been on the road with Bootsy and also Jill Scott. He's got a new album and a new band of his own.

"To this day, I'll be somewhere and someone will say, 'You're Bleek, aren't you?'"

BY TOM D'ANTONI

Farnell Newton, Portland trumpeter/composer, spent most of the summer of 2015 on two lengthy tours (and indeed most of the past year and a half), one with Jill Scott and one with Bootsy Collins. With *Ready to Roll*, a new album out, another ready to go and one in production, he's one of the busiest musicians in Oregon.

He also has a new nickname, "Neutron."

He's one of those musicians who is comfortable in any genre but who is currently focusing on Soul and Funk, and Jazz and various versions and combinations of them.

I spoke with him at World Cup Coffee and Tea in Portland, as part of OMN's Coffeeshop Conversations. This is an excerpt.

You've been on the road a lot this year.

I did a summer tour with Jill Scott. We did over 30 cities plus we did a bunch of TV for BET, TVOne, Good Morning America, Jimmy Kimmel. She's keeping us busy.

I've been with her band about two and a half years. I've been to Australia with her and looking forward to going to Europe. And at the same time I was performing with Bootsy Collins, so when she wasn't busy, I would leave there and go play with the legendary Funk master of the universe.

We went everywhere. All over Europe...and I hadn't been to Europe before.

I think everyone wants to know what it's like touring with Bootsy.

It's great, Bootsy's a character. But he's so about the music. He's serious as a heart-attack. But he's fun to be around, too. He calls me "Neutron."

On stage he's all bigger than life. [Imitates Bootsy amid laughter.] But when he's off-stage, he's all quiet and he'll go, "Hey Neutron, you were killing on that mug tonight. Man, you was tearing it."

He's all about making sure that it all feels right. You can be the most proficient and virtuosic musician but if the feeling's not there, he's making sure that you get the feeling and the groove and the hump. Some songs got to have a certain feel to it and he's about getting that by any means.

I've seen him kick the drummer off the drums and get on the drums to play "Flashlight."

I was in his band for about a year and I got my trombone player, Kyle Molitor, in the band as well.

Tony Ozier and Jarrod Lawson were some of your collaborators on the new album.

The song "Love + Peace" was sitting on Tony Ozier's hard drive for about a year and a half. Jarrod and I were too busy to make a new song, and he said, "Hey, go check out this song that Tony and I did." I said, "Oh my gosh, this is it!" And then I added my magic to it...

...What magic is that? [laughter between us]

My HORN! [more laughter] I had trumpet, flugelhorn, muted horns...I had the full gamut. I really took my time with that song.

They used to call you "Bleek," but now you've got a new name.

"Bleek Beats," named after Bleek Gilliam from the Spike Lee movie *Mo' Better Blues*...That was my Hip-Hop producer name. I produced for a lot of people around the country and I found out that that grind was even harder than being a musician. I could pick up my horn and make money like that [snaps his fingers].

To this day, I'll be somewhere and someone will say, "You're Bleek, aren't you?"

If Bootsy calls you Neutron, the whole world should call you Neutron.

Yes. He dubbed me that on stage. My manager was like, "We're going with that."

My new band is going to have a spring tour. We're calling it "Farnell Newton and the Othership Connection."

So now we can just say, "I want the bomb, I want the Neutron." [Big laughs] Who is in this band?

On drums, Tyrone Hendrix, on guitar is Agyei Ptah-Hotep Marshall, Kyle Molitor is on trombone, bassist used to be with Liv Warfield, Marquay Seamster, myself and our sixth man is Tony Ozier. [OMN]

Listen to the entire interview at oregonmusicnews.com or on the OMN Podcast on iTunes and Stitcher.

Liner Notes



Ready to Roll

Released April 14, 2015

Atlanta Records / Rope A Dope Records / FNBEATSGALORE

11 tracks / 39 minutes, 26 seconds

Guest artists include: Ashley Jayy, Donyea Goodman, Shannon Söderlund, Steven Rogers, Jon Shaw, Campbell Youngblood-Petersen, Jarrod Lawson, Tony Ozier, Skerik and Cleveland P. Jones.

THE SCENE



Guitarist Jennifer Batten named as 2015 She Rocks Award Recipient

The Women's International Music Network (the WiMN), an organization that recognizes women who stand out as role models in the music industry, has named acclaimed guitarist and Oregon resident Jennifer Batten as a 2016 She Rocks Award recipient. Best known for having played guitar for Michael Jackson's three solo world tours as well as the Superbowl XXVII performance, Batten has also toured and recorded with British guitar icon Jeff Beck for several years, recorded three solo CDs, written two music books, and released three instructional DVDs with truefire.com. Batten continues to tour the globe with performances and music seminars. The awards event takes place on January 22, 2016, at 6:30 p.m. in the Anaheim Hilton Hotel during the NAMM Show.

Britt Festival to headline Crater Lake centennial celebration

Jacksonville's Britt Festival has commissioned New York-based composer Michael Gordon to create a new work inspired by Crater Lake, to be performed by members of the Britt Orchestra and Music Director Teddy Abrams in July 2016, with the dramatic panorama of the entire lake as the backdrop.

The National Park Service was founded August 1916.

"We have been searching for innovative and unique opportunities with which to showcase Crater Lake for the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service," says Craig W. Ackerman, Superintendent of Crater Lake National Park (CLNP). "The Britt proposal does all that and more. A place-based musical composition will connect the spectacular scenery and resources of the lake with a cultural and artistic heritage that stretches beyond the founding of the park. These perfor-

mances along the caldera will attract national recognition for

the park, the Rogue Valley and all of southern Oregon."

Gordon will serve as artist-in-residence several times throughout the year at Crater Lake, to draw on the park for inspiration for his composition.

"The project at Crater Lake (working title) is designed to be an experiential spacial work," Gordon said. "The idea is to draw out the natural sounds in and around Crater Lake and connect the natural sonic environment to the orchestra."

The performances will take place over two days in the last weekend of July 2016, and will be free and open to all park-goers.

United States Vinyl Market Continues to Rise

New figures posted by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) have revealed that vinyl sales in the United States in the first half of 2015 contributed more to the music industry than Spotify Free, YouTube and Vevo combined. Good news for Oregon's first vinyl manufacturing plant, Cascade Record Pressing, based in Milwaukie, that launched earlier this year.

Portland Middle School Students Get Surprise Concert, Gift

On Thursday, September 17, Portland-based rock band, Portugal. The Man joined StubHub employees to surprise the students of Portland's Ron Russell Middle School with a special performance and instrument donation valued at \$35K. StubHub partnered with The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation for the donation. Earlier this year, StubHub committed to putting \$1 million worth of musical instruments into at-risk public school music education programs.

Got a news tip? Feature Idea? Contribution? Send it to contact@oregonmusicnews.com.



Each month, Sunny Clark queues up three of Oregon's music insiders — an artist, an industry pro and an OMN staffer — to ask each three questions about their musical and other tastes. Find out: Who they're Queuing up to hear; where they're Questing to with their other appetites; and who, what, or where has recently made them Quiver with delight.



Dan Eichler

Booker, Mississippi Pizza Pub & Atlantis Lounge

Queued: Steve Earle at Revolution Hall and it was a terrific show! His latest CD is a Blues album and his set showcased the album and other material he's written that's Blues-based. He also played a number of his most well-known songs — he likes to satisfy his fans!

Questing: To Dove Vivi — a favorite that I just went back to recently. They make a unique cornmeal crust pizza; it's somewhat similar to Chicago pizza, but it's really their own thing. Delicious salads as well.

Quivers: For POP-

goji. I think they're the next big World Music group in Portland. They played at a couple of free park shows this past summer and their fan base has really grown. They're a multicultural group that plays music based on Brazilian rhythms and lean heavily on vintage Soul and R & B songs with some touches of Hip Hop as well as traditional Brazilian tunes sung in Portuguese.



Angel Bouchet

Angel Bouchet Blues Band / Portlandia

Queued: For Alabama Shakes this summer and they were awesome. The lead vocalist is impressive, though I was disappointed in the sound mixing. The vocals should ride on top of the music, not get buried by it.

Questing: To the best BBQ in town, The People's Pig; their smoked meats are done on site and I swear I gain weight just walking in the door.

Quivers: For Duffy Bishop. She knows how to put on a show! Unlike bands who stand on stage like

storefront mannequins, Duffy Bishop is a serious entertainer. No wonder Teatro ZinZanni talked her into working with them.



Ana Ammann

OMN Publisher

Queued: To the Virgin Music Festival in the UK. I've been dying for that British festival experience, and got it — rain, Wellies and glamping! Three glorious days where I caught performances by Marina & The Diamonds, Tove Lo, Ellie Goulding, Echo & The Bunnymen, The Script, The Kooks, Sam Smith, Kasabian, Calvin Harris and more.

Quests: To Verde Cocina. With two spots to choose from — Northwest and Hillsdale — their farm-to-table quesadilla with a mountain of fresh vegetables, artisan queso, handcrafted chorizo and tortillas is magnifico!

Quivering: For local artists Novosti, Leo Islo and The Cabin Project. Eagerly awaiting new music by DUDDY, A Silent Film and Tracey Thorn.



The Weather Machine performing at The Governor's Cup Coffee Roasters, where frontman Slater Smith often performed solo while attending Willamette University// Photo by Benjamin Mah

IN A GOOD PLACE

The Weather Machine ready to expand its fanbase to the East Coast and beyond

BY OSSIE BLADINE

"Whether I mean or not, I think a lot of my songs become very place oriented," says Slater Smith, frontman of The Weather Machine. That's likely why the Oregon-native's lyrics resonate so well across all corners of the state.

With upcoming tours on the East Coast and in Europe — and a gig opening for the Alabama Shakes for the Crystal Ballroom's December to Remember in between — Slater will have plenty of fodder to inspire upcoming songs.

Smith was born in the Portland area, grew up in Sisters and attended Willamette University in Salem. In the midst of writing his thesis at college, he met Colin Robson, who had just moved from New York to turn

his grandmother's Pacific City beachfront house into a recording studio — Kiwanda Sound Recordings.

"I always wanted to do a band thing, but I just didn't know how," said Smith, who refined his singer/songwriting around Salem venues like the Governor's Cup. "Collin, being the ultimate collaborator ... He talked us into doing the band."

The band was built around songs that Smith had already written, releasing a self-titled debut album in 2013. But the makings of a cohesive band were there early on. That included cellist Matt Cartmill.

"He was a surprise. He pushed it all in a unique direction, and he's since become sort of a centerpiece of the band," Smith said.

He added, "It started out as a backing band of my solo songs and evolved very quickly into a collaborate effort."

Among those first recordings created in Pacific City was "Back O'er Oregon," which Smith said originated as a challenge to himself to incorporate his home state into a song. That summer, he set out to visit all 185 state parks, and recorded himself playing the song in each one, sometimes solo, sometimes with band members. The Oregon Governor's Office of Film & Television helped fund the project, and a music video that exhibits the landscape of a state so beautiful and varied was created.

The project also put The Weather Machine on the map as a band Oregonians could connect with.

But being just a sea-to-mountain folk band is not the goal of the group, which now includes Luke Hoffman on drums and Andre Zapata on bass. After

WEATHER *continued on page 14*



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Slater Smith of The Weather Machine // Photo by Benjamin Mah

WEATHER

continued from page 13

a few personnel changes along the way, Smith said the current lineup has found it easy to come together as a group.

"People are always surprised at how tight we are," he said.

The group released *Peach*, in March, which Smith said feels kind of like a second debut album.

"Like we're debuting the new iteration of the band. We've been redefining ourselves over the last couple years," he said. "The first record was folksy, but we've evolved into a much more high energy rocksy act. It's been fun to settle into that identity as a group."

While taking frontman duties and often taking on the role as face of the band, Smith said there's no single ownership among the members. "It's no one's singular vision. ... It's kind of like I bring in a skeleton and then the whole band pushes it as far from Americana as we can."

That cohesive approach is evident on *Peach*. The album garnered praise from reviewers locally and from afar: "The spirit of Weather Machine is still largely present, with a focus on songwriting and storytelling, but it's more about how The Weather Machine are telling the stories that is so noticeably changed," wrote Jeff Pearson of *Paste Magazine*. "They have bolstered their sound through live performances, garnering attention as a full-fledged rock band, capable of channeling a soaring energy through their performances that is fully evident here."

Smith's lyrics have a movement to them, often telling stories of human relationships with one another and to the landscapes around them. Sometimes it's universal, sometimes it's very Oregon. "And we're in high school, don't want to be cool, with red dust on tennis shoes," he sings on "Wannabe Cowboys," about running around the Sisters Rodeo with a soon-to-be flame.

"The idea of it is kind of being a love song, but it's more about being about home, disguised as a love song."

"How to Get to Roseburg" spawned from a joke while on the road about giving up on everything and moving to Roseburg. It, too, is disguised with human relations — "Rosie, babe, I'm coming home," Smith sings. And a new song he wrote recently was inspired when entering into Montana.

"Place to me has become important," he said. "Hopefully as I go more places it'll help me write more songs."

The band hired a booking agent to set up an East Coast tour in November, and then were approached by a European booking agent who set up a March tour in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

With all that to look forward to, the phone call asking if the band would open for Alabama Shakes on December 7 at the Crystal Ballroom was icing on the cake.

"It's a pretty surreal thing. We're trying to not be too psyched out about it," Smith said. "It's been a very good year. I feel like it's snowballing in a good way." [OMN]

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Cabaret's beginnings

Dave Fleschner and Earl Thomas join forces for new project, album

BY SCOTT CUNNINGHAM

Where Love Begins is the title of the forthcoming album from The Blues Cabaret. It just might be a fitting title for the next chapter in Dave Fleschner's career as well.

The Portland-based pianist, composer and arranger has been making albums in the area since he moved here in 1995 from Northern California. None, though, are quite like *Where Love Begins*.

If you haven't heard of The Blues Cabaret, that's okay, due to the fact it is a brand new project, the brainchild of Fleschner and long-time friend and fellow musician Earl Thomas. Fleschner and Thomas first met on a Blues Cruise and Fleschner credits him for providing the spark that eventually resulted in the project.

After playing with Curtis Salgado for six years, Fleschner struck out on his own, drawn to the appeal of performing as a duo with Alan Hager.

"I was trying to do more of this duo kind of stuff because I was just sick of playing in bands. Trying to keep a band working is difficult. With a duo, you can have a not so good kind of night and everybody still comes out ahead (financially)."

Fleschner and Thomas had gotten to know one another and through a stroke of fortuitous timing and geography, at the time Thomas was living in the same town Fleschner grew up in, where the two played a one-off gig one night that went incredibly well.

"The next day Earl called me up and asked me to join his band," Fleschner recalls during an extended conversation at his home in Southwest Portland. "I realized later that he was training me to be his music director.

"In the meantime, I've been playing him a lot of my songs, mostly in an effort to get him to put one on an

Earl Thomas record. Instead, he convinced me to do this whole project."

Fleschner originally envisioned the material he was writing to result in another duo record with Hager. As Thomas listened to more and more of the material, he encouraged Fleschner to take the songs he had written to another level.

The Blues Cabaret emerged from these conversations and is the name of the band for *Where Love Begins*. Included on the album are four vocalists, three horns, guitar, upright bass, drums, piano, and a string quartet.

Ample harmonies and lead switching provide plenty of room for Thomas, Fleschner, and the remaining two vocalists, Jimmy Wilcox and Billy Mixer, who are soloists for the Portland Gay Men's Chorus.

"Both Billy and Jimmy wrote a lot of the vocal harmonies. But it became more of an ensemble thing. Instead of Earl in front and two singers, it is all of us getting a turn at lead and all of us backing each other up. There's a lot of four part harmony and three part harmony."

Fleschner has done a lot of arranging for other artists and choirs, but *Where Love Begins* is his first attempt at complex arrangements of his own material. "It is the most ambitious project I've done for myself," he says.

Style-wise, the album covers a lot of ground and includes some funky material with big bass lines and horns, some shuffles with a bluesy feel, Jazz, and a bit of Pop.

"Don't Dig Too Deep," the album's lead track, is reminiscent of early Dr. John, with plenty of piano, horns, and funky bass lines. "I Want to Love You" is a sweeping ballad with piano



Left to right, Dave Fleschner, Earl Thomas, Jimmy Wilcox and Billy Mixer // Courtesy Dave Fleschner

and strings that has a Ray Charles feel.

Most of the 13 cuts on the album exist in these boundaries between Jazz, Blues and Soul. One marked departure from this formula is "Goin' to a Party," a tale of attending a swingers ball.

"Earl calls me up and says 'I've got a great idea for this song, let's do 'Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy' like an Andrews Sisters song but it's three gay guys,'" Fleschner recalls.

The result is a humorous musical foray straight out of 1940s Swing. [OMN]

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LEGACY STORY

Liv Warfield Tells OMN how she got to be a backup singer with Prince

In our six years, we've posted over 15,000 stories, photo galleries, video and audio interviews. About six weeks after we launched, we told the story of how Portland singer/composer Liv Warfield got to be one of Prince's backup singers.

Today, of course, she's an international star in her own right, still performing with Prince. Here is how it all started.

BY TOM D'ANTONI
December 2, 2009

Liv Warfield first drew attention as "Olivia" singing karaoke on East Burnside, then with Joey Porter in a band called Silky, when all of a sudden she was Liv with a new look and a fine album in 2006.

She doesn't want to go into the unfortunate things that happened to her on the business end of her career but it wasn't pretty. It has turned very pretty. Many Portlanders saw her first sing with Prince on the Jay Leno show.

Wow! That's "our Liv!" was the reaction around here.

She is now one of Prince's three regular backup singers and has never been happier. We sat in a coffee shop and talked.

What's the story on how you got to be one of Prince's backup singers?

I was doing a lot of traveling and I met this lady at the Soul Conference, she was actually his (Prince's) background singer before. I had run into her randomly. I knew there was something different, something about her that was just... Marva King was just different. I saw her once, and then three or four months later I did PDX Pop Now! and I did "Gimmie Shelter." Somebody recorded it on video. Marva called a friend of mine and said, "You know, Prince is auditioning new background vocalists. Do you want to send a video?" He called me and said, "Do you want to send that video?" I said, "Whatever."

Three months after that I hadn't heard anything and then in Detroit I get a phone call and Marva said, "He loves you. Will you come to Paisley?" I'll never forget that because I was out of town... I was at the Soul Track Awards — they had nominated me for best new artist... I didn't win. I didn't care about that, I was happy to be nominated.

I was in my hotel room and I just randomly get a phone call... I would never ever, ever, ever, ever, ever think in a million years that I would get a call like that and it honestly changed my life.

That's the kind of phone call people dream about.

It was surreal. It was like slow motion. I didn't know whether to scream. I didn't know if it was fake. I didn't know.... But I had gone through a lot within the past year and a half. Things were going well with the record, very well, but somewhere along the line... I didn't think my career was over, I more thought, "I don't know my path right now. Where am I going right now?"

I still wanted to travel. I still wanted to do a lot of shows. I couldn't bring my band with me, which was unfortunate, but I still had to represent. I couldn't stop what I was doing, but I was doing it with no purpose. I was unorganized.

And then I got that call and it woke me up because I think it was more like, "OK, it's not done." I prayed and prayed for something like this, not on this scale, but I just prayed for a change. How do I harness now what I've created?

It put it all in perspective for me, Tom. I'm serious.

What did she say in the phone call?

She said, "He saw your video and, of four girls, he really liked you." And I was like, "Mmmm mmmm (that can't be)." She said, "Yeah, he really liked you and you've got to come to Paisley." I left the next day, straight to Minneapolis.

What was that flight like?

I was afraid. In these situations, you're not taught. You're just thrown into the fire. It had been eight years... I had sung background with Patrick Lamb and a couple of my friends, but not on a scale like Prince. How does he want me to be? I don't read music. How am I gonna fare with all the rest of these people who are crazy professional, who have been in it for a long time?

So you get there...

He's the sweetest person. Very welcoming. I got to the front door and I was like, "Oh God" [sighs]...

Breathe Liv, breathe...

Seriously. You've just got to be ready to go with the flow. My friend Sedell Jones always says... been saying this for five, six years, "Be ready when you get the call." So I got the call.

I'm walking down the hallway. Prince asked me if I was hungry. I said, [a very clipped] "Nope." But he was like, "Come on." He was very welcoming.



About three hours after that we sat around the keys with the two other girls, including Marva King, and he started playing this song and I think it was more reaction like, "OK, Liv, can you fit in, can you harmonize? Can you go where they go?" He was just watching to see how I could fare with them, how I could fit in... And, God, I picked it UP.

He's really humble and he shares his light. I'm learning so much from him. I feel like I'm a sponge, I'm just absorbing him. He's very serious about his craft. We have long rehearsals. I've never been in a situation where I'm singing with two other girls. Marva King has been singing with him for ten-plus years. Shelby had been singing with D'Angelo. These women have had serious industry work. Obviously, it worked out fine. I'm still there.

So he starts playing a tune and all of a sudden here comes Liv.

I had five seconds to think about what's the right note that's going to come out of my mouth.

Did you have to think about it, or did it just happen?

It just happened. I had to brace myself because when I was hearing him singing I had to take myself out as a fan. It's just natural. You're sitting in front of him and, like, "Oh my God, are you serious? Is he really singing this note? Am I really standing around the keys?"

Walking down that hallway I knew it was either now or never. Like my mom says, "You'll never go down this path again, so make it the best that you possibly can." ...And I did.

He still scolds me when I'm doing something wrong. He feels there's potential... He never would have taken me in. I finally feel like I'm worthy of something. For the longest time, even when I've been doing my songs and playing, I was like, "When do you start to think that you have accepted yourself?"

I've always been competitive by nature as an athlete, so I'm just trying to push myself. Where can I take myself? Keep taking myself. Now with him teaching me...

I know any great leader knows exactly what he or she wants, that's the mark of a great leader. Does he give you notes to sing or point you in a direction?

He does. I better have a pen and a piece of paper ready at all times... Better have a recorder.

I learn more professionalism. Raw got me there, but professionalism is taking me a little further. Things that I wasn't opening my eyes to. He's very detailed and I'm learning to be more detailed.

You've always been pretty detailed haven't you?

To an extent... Until working with him. This is serious perfection. You have to think he's brilliant. Sleep music, think music all the time... 24/7. I love his mystique. It keeps people at a distance but now I understand why. There's no other way. I wish I could go more in depth.

You played with Prince in Paris?

It was my first time performing overseas and Oh, my God! They appreciate the artist. I think it takes you back to how the artist should be treated. As Americans, we're super-spoiled.

We made history that night. Nobody had ever played a concert in the Grand Palais. You have to think... to have a stage like that... 15-, 20-thousand people... I try not to let people know I'm super-fresh with this.

When I'm done with the show, I'm trippin', but when I go out to do it, I'm just, "OK, a soldierette. Just make it go."

They picked us up in the afternoon in Paris. The feeling of going inside the Grand Palais... The doors are probably 20 feet... There's like, cameras. The best experience was when we walked in chanting... all day all night... "You can be my baby... make you feel alright."

My selfish moment: there was beautiful dim blue lights on the stage... amazing.... I'm the first one to run up on the stage and for like .5 seconds I'm like, "Is this what it's really like? What if this stage was my stage?"

He gives me tambourines. I've never played tambourines or shakers, cowbells and stuff. He says, "Liv... tambourine." It took me a while. The first time I tried it he knew I was not coordinated with that. I'm used to just singing on the mic. But I love it now. He'll look and go, "Where's that cowbell? You should be shaking it now."

He said to me when we were recording, "I love your voice on Rock 'n' Roll." When I came to him, that was the direction I thought I was going... Your classic Tina, Chaka... That's where I feel like my energy now.

Any other influences from him?

Liv can no longer wear heels on stage. [laughing]

Do you know when you're going out on the road with Prince again?

We never know. We get a call and we leave in a day or two. That's exciting to get the call, "You're going to Paris. Be here at Paisley in two days."

"Sure, I'll cancel the gig."

I'm all about being the Phoenix right now. I've never been as excited. I've never been so happy. [OMN]

Dusty Rock Hybrid

All Across the Land
Blitzen Trapper
Vagrant Records

Blitzen Trapper has delivered one of their very best. The title track "All Across This Land" will have you rocking down the highway or running that extra mile from the moment you press play. Seasoned fans will recall elements of their earlier albums *Furr* and *American Goldwing*. If Blitzen Trapper is new to you then you're in for a sonic specialty craft brew with these Portland-based troubadours. Blitzen Trapper's always had a knack for blending their influences across genres and eras while inventing a sound that is uniquely their own but also familiar, like a well worn pair of your favorite boots. "Love Grow



Cold" and "Across The River" are creatively tinged with echoes of Dylan with a dash of Westerberg. Earley's lyrical stories deepen with each listen, that's one of the rare gifts of his songwriting style. You'll be singing along before you know it to their Alt-Country-Indie-Rock-hybrid anthems like "Let The Cards Fall" and jangly ballads like "Even If You Don't" and "Mystery and Wonder." Catch them live

November 9 at HiFi Music Hall in Eugene, OR.

Blitzen Trapper's album *All Across This Land* (mixed by James Brown — Foo Fighters, U2) is available October 2.

—Christine E. Holding

Post-Punk Whimsey

Escape Was Narrow
Wilderness
Self-released

Bend-based Wilderness just released *Escape Was Narrow*. They waltz in with "Afterlife Crisis," a dreamy ballroom serenade that takes you on a surprising swirling spin in the middle then gently returns you to the start. Curiosity definitely piques. There's something lofty and lilting afoot here and it's good. Surf-Punk undertones in "The Wayward Warrior"

collide with keys in a novel and inspired mash-up of retro meets ethereal tones and reverb. "What Would Happen if I Never Did" is a spritely cheerful head-bobber with crimson-edged lyrics — it's a cheerful song with an offbeat theme. "Endless Dreamer" conjures up the notion that this might indeed be on an inspired break-up mix. Wilderness is Bradley David Parsons (drums), Nick



"Sassy" Graham (bass), Nora K.W. Smith (keys, vocals, noise makers) and Jared Nelson Smith (guitars, vocals, buttons). These four generate a wall of sound like a symphony of eclectic crescendos that fall into gentle rolling waves. Their pop melodies are catchy and just quirky enough to throw you off balance in a playful way. Wilderness is

a rollercoaster of aural flavors; they are at once forceful, frolicking, rooted yet wandering, but intentional and purposeful — no random notes. Wilderness is skilled in crafting a whimsical and mischievous course that takes the road less traveled and it's so much more fun.

—Christine E. Holding

GET OUT!

OMN STAFF PICKS

BY ESTEVAN MUÑOZ

Taylor John Williams & Noah Guthrie

October 15
Alberta Rose Theater, Portland

Coming from the singing-on-TV-generation, *The Voice* finalist and Portland native Taylor John Williams together with the newest addition to the *Glee* cast of last season, Noah Guthrie, are bringing forth their Blues-Soul crooning talents. You will swoon for them, I promise. 6:30 p.m. \$18-22. Minors OK w/ guardian.

Skylar Spence

October 16
Holocene, Portland

Shifting away from his inspired genre-fusing music that catapulted him to an impressive internet following, the musical mastermind has instead entered the world of Power-Pop, with synths and beats unearthing ancient circadian rhythms. In other words, his music makes you dance. 9 p.m. \$10-12. 21+.

Hanz Araki

October 18
Rock Creek Tavern, Hillsboro

The highly accomplished singer and flute player has been a prominent and leading figure in the Northwest Irish music scene for the past two decades. In that time he's released 10 studio albums, toured internationally, and collaborated with well-respected musicians in and outside of the Celtic genre. 6 p.m. Free. 21+.

Death

October 18
Mississippi Studios, Portland

In the early 1970s when American radios were playing Funk, three brothers from Detroit, Michigan, unknowingly tapped into the raw, fast and angry: the Punk. But it was before Punk, so Proto-Punk. Meet the legendary Death. 8 p.m. \$17-20. 21



Gwar return to PDX // Photo courtesy Gwar

Gwar

October 19
Roseland Theater, Portland

Celebrating the grotesque of this world, Heavy-Metal/Shock-Rock enthusiast Gwar has enjoyed a near 30-year career of producing the slimiest, visceral, and imaginative music of their respective genre. 8 p.m. \$18. All ages.

Dave Rawlings Machine

October 21
McDonald Theatre, Eugene
October 22
Aladdin Theater, Portland

Recorded on analog tape in Nashville, Tennessee, the eagerly awaited second album of Country band powerhouse the Dave Rawlings Machine, entitled *Nashville Obsolete*, continues and expands on the group's intuitive feel for storytelling and sonics aiming to provoke imagery of culturally rich American south. 7 p.m. \$32-35. All ages.

Naomi Wachira

October 23
Walters Cultural Arts Center, Hillsboro

Celebrated in 2013 as Best Folk Singer in Seattle, Naomi's sincere musical style also enjoys a melting pot of influences. Drawing upon her childhood in Kenya, her residency in the Northwest, and influences such as Tracy Chapman, Ms. Wachira is an exciting trailblazer of cross-cultural sounds. 7:30 p.m. \$14-18. All ages.

Hot Club of Cowtown

October 25
Alberta Rose Theatre, Portland

Bringing the distinctive sound of Gypsy-Jazz to Austin, TX, Hot Club of Cowtown brings their swingin' thing to the City of Roses, aiming to enchant us with their mystical music. 7 p.m. \$17-20. Minors ok w/ guardian.

Rebecca Kilgore & Greta Matassa

October 26
Lake Theater & Cafe, Lake Oswego

Two Northwest-originated Jazz/Swing vocalists Rebecca Kilgore and Greta Matassa are combining their talents for a mellow night in Lake Oswego. Prepare for a night of unbridled joy anchored by lovely voices! 7 p.m. \$20. All ages.

Mac DeMarco

October 28
Crystal Ballroom, Portland

Along the likes of a modern Steely Dan, the mischievous and goofy Indie-Rock internet star Mac DeMarco has had remarkable success with watery, down-to-earth, blissful tunes that are punctuated with his expressive electric guitar playing. 8 p.m. \$25-28. All ages.

Beats Antique

October 30
McDonald Theatre, Eugene

The experimental Beats Antique relish in their musical oddities, aiming to melt World Fusion and Electronic together with a surprising amount of success. Their live shows have grown notorious for including everything from Tribal Fusion dances to performance art. 7 p.m. \$25. All ages.

The Peter and Will Anderson Trio

October 29
Christo's Pizza & Lounge, Salem
October 30
Wildish Theater, Springfield

Identical twins from New York dubbed "virtuosos on clarinet and saxophone" by *The New York Times* and "Remarkable" by the *Wall Street Journal*, Peter and Will Anderson play upbeat jazz with consistently fresh arrangements and vintage flair.

King Dude

October 31
Mississippi Studios, Portland

Spend Halloween Night exploring the peculiarities of musician King Dude: a man with a dark, biblical-tinged Blues sound and stark prophetic lyrics concerning hope and salvation. It is heavy stuff, but Halloween night has always been a great opportunity to seek out one's morbid curiosity. 7 p.m. \$12. 21+.

Mac Miller

November 6
McDonald Theatre,
Eugene

Indie-Rap sensation Mac Miller may have seemed to drop off from both mainstream and underground Hip-Hop audiences for the last three years, but the recent singles for his new album *GO:OD AM* has shown the energetic rapper's immense improvement with his already dexterous, multi-syllable lyrical style. 7 p.m. \$32.50. All ages.



Photo courtesy Mac Miller

Rainspout Music Festival

November 13-15
Rainspout, Yachats

The traditionally bucolic Oregon Coast will be host to an eclectic mix of world-class performers with intimate shows and one-of-a-kind meet the artist sessions throughout the city of Yachats. Everything from Celtic, New Orleans brass, and Gypsy Violin will be available to enjoy. \$0-30. Various locations throughout Yachats.

Wildwood All Star Band, w/ The Low Bones

November 14
Wildwood Hotel, Willamina

These guys did too good playing Willy Nelson all Sunday morning at the Wildwood Music Fest in July to leave it at that. 8 p.m. 21+.

Brad Mehldau Trio

November 14
Aladdin Theater, Portland

Jazz pianist Brad Mehldau has recorded and performed with a remarkable consistency of output since the early 1990s, and coupled with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy, the trio has managed to find a direct and singular sound that is modernizing contemporary Jazz. 7 p.m. \$35-40. Minors ok w/ guardian.

Yellowcard

November 14
Roseland Theater, Portland

With the unique usage of a violin, Pop/Punk group Yellowcard has managed to create a distinctive musical style all their own within a consistently mundane genre, where experimentation is never as commercially awarded as Yellowcard has been. 8 p.m. \$22. All ages.

Grand Royale - Beastie Boys Tribute / Island in the Sun - Weezer Tribute

November 14
Doug Fir Lounge, Portland

Hip Hop heroes Beastie Boys and Power Rock gurus Weezer are legendary bands for the post-80s/90s generations, but sadly, catching them live is becoming more and more of a rarity, so welcome these tributes and expect more in the future. They are legends for a reason. 8 p.m. \$15. 21+. [OMN]



Alt Rockers Yellowcard makes a habit of taking a photo with each crowd they perform for. // Photo courtesy Yellowcard

Matt Alber

November 2
Lake Theater & Cafe, Lake Oswego

The low-key California-based Folk musician has been quietly building his solo career — having left the Grammy-award winning vocal ensemble Chanticleer in the mid-2000s — illustrating a remarkable sense of musical storytelling, which is heightened by his unusual countertenor voice. 7 p.m. \$20. All ages.

Chris Smither

November 12
Alberta Rose Theatre, Portland

Folk Rock/Blues singer-songwriter legend Chris Smither has nearly 50 years under his belt in being musically active, and his lyrical tendencies of poetics, philosophy, and forlorn characters with heartbroken pasts has colored his ongoing career brilliantly. 6:30 p.m. \$20-23. Minors OK w/guardian.

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