

## SOCIAL INTERCOURSE

### Curse of the Golden Flower

Directed by Zhang Yimou  
Starring Chow-Yun Fat and Gong Li  
Princess Theatre  
Opens Friday, 12 January

Zhang Yimou, director of *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*, directs another historical drama focused on the trials and tribulations of the dynasties of China's past. This time set in the Tang dynasty in the tenth century, Yimou's film, like his previous works, looks at China in a simpler time, when wars were fought using intricate wire work, allowing people to fly spinning through the air while fighting and jumping off of buildings in slow motion, floating to earth and landing unhurt. The warriors' elegance in running across the tops of their enemies' heads in the face of fervent choreographed battle was well documented throughout Chinese history and led to Yimou's inspiration.

### Dudley Dawson

With Down the Hatch and Sonance  
Saturday, 13 January at 9pm  
Sidetrack Café  
\$7 at door

As far as adjectives describing punk or metal bands go, "adrenaline-fueled" may be the most overused. But while many very non-punk bands such as Blink 182 and Good Charlotte have had the descriptor thrown over their music like so much confetti, Edmonton's Dudley Dawson actually has the riffs to back up this claim. The quartet of punkers will rage with hormonal intensity at the Sidetrack on Saturday to promote their new album, *Zero Hour*.

### The Ramblin' Ambassadors

With Cordoba  
Saturday, 13 January at 8pm  
Victory Lounge, 18+  
\$8 at door

Generally finding themselves placed near the back of the UN General Assembly due to their excessive monopolizing of the floor, the Ambassadors took the hint and spent their time during their dull international meetings to sharpen their guitars and silence their voices. The Vancouver band was founded by Brent J Cooper, guitarist for Calgary rockabilly enthusiasts Huevos Rancheros, and takes their instrumental-only guitar rock to the Victory Lounge, a performance certified 100 per cent vocal ramblin' free.

### At The Stroke Of Madness

With The Sessions and In Due Time  
Tuesday, 16 January at 9pm  
Sidetrack Cafe  
\$7 at door

When the bell tolls midnight and the raven screams "Nevermore," you will be At The Stroke Of Madness. As you slowly descend into the soul-crushing pit of insomnia and psychosis, take a moment to lighten up with the acoustic rock melodies of this Edmonton band. They "let the music do the talking," creating a sound that speaks to you like a live, beating heart under the floorboards.

### The nancy ray-guns

With Guests  
Wednesday, 17 January at 9pm  
Sidetrack Café

Never before—and likely never again—will a parody of a former First Lady's name be used to describe a band that combines two elements destined at some point to meet: agriculture and funk music. Of this we can be certain. Billed as "Saskatchewan's Agrarian Funk Band," though that restriction could likely be loosened to include the rest of the world as well, The nancy ray-guns combine equal parts George Clinton and John Deere for a night that should get your wheat grooving.

JOHN KMECH

A ghostly presence for the past few weeks



# Playing musical leapfrog

According to Mahogany Frog's Graham Epp, the group is renowned for its ribbiting performances

### Mahogany Frog

With Daydream Exchange  
Friday, 12 January at 9pm  
Sidetrack Café

JOHN KMECH  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

The thrill of a live music performance rarely involves models cavorting down a runway sporting functioning buzz saws and routers; however, for Winnipeg's Mahogany Frog, this is only one of the atypical visual aspects they employ during live shows, an element that gives a whole new meaning to experimental music.

"Earlier on, when we were younger and still living in Saskatoon, we did some pretty crazy shows," explains Graham Epp, the band's frontman and multi-instrumentalist. "We did a power tools fashion show one time where people came in—I don't even know what they wore for clothes—but they had power tools that were on and they were swinging them around. So that was really kind of scary."

Although flying portable belt sanders might seem a tad risky, the band can't help it; creating chaos, especially through the blending of rock, jazz, electronica samplings and Moog synthesizers—one of their key instruments—is vital to the Mahogany Frog experience.

Eye candy never hurts, either. Mahogany Frog has used film, spoken word, performance art and ethnic food to accent their stage presence. Epp explains that they're currently focusing more on the physical art the band is capable of creating, which includes, according to his description, the intense use of a "rock face."

"We're actually not working on anything right now, as far as visuals are concerned. I've obviously never seen us play, but [Jean Paul Perron], our drummer, is definitely the visual focal point

of the band," Epp laughs.

"I do see him, when I turn around. He's standing up a lot while he's drumming. He's got a good drumming face. He's definitely an entertaining guy to watch. The rest of us are probably just making really rude guitar faces or something. But yeah, that's what we rely on now. I mean, if we could always bring an arsenal of power tools along [on tour], we would, but then we'd have to leave some of our synthesizers at home."

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GRAHAM EPP

Epp formed Mahogany Frog with his high-school friend Jesse Warkentin back in 1998. After going through several lineup changes through the years, including a brief stint as a sextet, the band has settled in as a four-piece, with Perron on drums and Scott Ellenberger on bass and trumpet. While Epp and Warkentin began as a psychedelic rock group, Perron introduced the synthesizers and samplers when he joined, and the band never looked back. However, although Mahogany Frog cranks out a sound that's akin to the Mahavishnu Orchestra updated for the digital age, Epp insists that when writing the songs, he never consciously creates experimental music.

"I write a lot of the progressions and the melodies, then I'll bring it to the band and it always develops into something else," Epp notes. "It's mostly just a combination of the four of us. If we played these songs in a different band, they might sound very straightforward."

In 2005, the band released *Mahogany Frog On Blue*, which featured a change of pace for the band with shorter, faster compositions than their previous releases. Epp explains that this was mostly due to the fact that they were preparing the disc for vinyl release.

"We were limited to how much music we could fit on there, so the reason the tracks are little, quick rock and roll songs is partly due to the time constraint," Epp says. "We've always wanted to have our music on vinyl. We're going to do that for the next record too, even though the songs are going to be longer."

Their songwriting also showcases another side of Mahogany Frog: their sense of humour. Since the quartet's music is, described in their own words, "stuffed full of no vocals," their subtle witticisms are embedded within the guitar lines and synth progressions. The band's quirkiness could be symbolized by their love for a certain British comedic genius. So just what is Mahogany Frog's favorite Peter Sellers movie, you ask?

"Ooh, I'd say either *The Magic Christian* or *The Party*," Epp says. "We don't want to take ourselves too seriously, since we're playing pretty strange music. There's a lot of little inside jokes we have in our songs, a little circus bit here or there. We have a sense of humour, whether it's good or not."

Indeed, these are humble words, especially coming from a man whose band hosted and survived the runway show of a carpenter's dreams.

"I remember one guy wearing a dress and swinging a skill saw around," recalls Epp with a chuckle. "I was very afraid."