

Ripper's just hunting for your ears

musicpreview

Eugene Ripper

With Michael Rault
Saturday, 24 November at 7pm
Axis Café (10349 Jasper Avenue)

SARAH STEAD
Arts & Entertainment Writer



You may not know him by name, but Eugene Ripper is no stranger to the music business. He's been making and performing music since the early '80s—but he wasn't always playing folk.

Ripper's first band was Stark Naked and the Fleshtones, a cheeky punk act that he joined when he was just 16. The transition from punk rocker to folk artist may seem strange, but Ripper insists that even with an acoustic guitar in hand, he remains true to his punk roots.

"I was just playing guitar in my punk band, so [going solo] was a way for me to start to expand as a songwriter," he explains. "I kept the edge I cut my teeth on with my punk roots and expanded it with the introduction of the acoustic guitar and a wider killing field of lyrical topics."

The number of genres and styles Ripper blends together he credits to a wide variety of musical influences. Genres are irrelevant; if something catches Ripper's ear, he'll sit down and give it a listen.

"[Inspiration] can be anything," he says. "From flipping through the dial on the car radio, to sitting down with a Jamaican music collection, to downloading Radiohead's latest, to Woody Guthrie [...], Arcade Fire, or just being down in the local pub and hearing a great Rockabilly guitarist. I'm looking for [inspiration] wherever I go."

Ripper's certainly spent more than his share of time globetrotting, spending time living in Vancouver, Halifax, and New York. Of those temporary

homes, it was the Big Apple which inspired his most recent release, *Fast Folk Underground 2.0*.

"There's a lot of New York City in *Fast Folk*, and I think that New York, probably more than any place that I've lived, has left the largest footprint in terms of attitude in the music," Ripper says. "Having spent a couple years being creative in [New York], feeling the energy of that city, the pulse, and the edge [...] it's hard to wash that off your hands."

While only four tracks long, Ripper feels particularly proud of *Fast Folk*—so proud that he's giving it away for free to try and attract a larger audience.

"One of the biggest challenges for artists these days to get people's attention," he says. "So the album is

out there on my website for free, and I wholeheartedly encourage people to rip it, share it, set it free, and enjoy it—with no strings attached."

Really, all Ripper wants is to be heard. The cheeky punk days of his youth may be over, but he still finds excitement in touring—especially when someone knows his work. After more than two decades in the music business, he deserves it, too.

"[There's a] thrill of [people] in different cities welcoming my music into their life, and their ears," Ripper says. "It's not the big, crazy events that you remember; it's somebody calling out for a song that they've heard on another album, relating on a direct level, and making connections."



albumreview

Alter Bridge

Blackbird
Universal Republic

DAVID JOHNSTON
Arts & Entertainment Writer

In 1923, American poet Wallace Stevens published a charming little poem entitled "Thirteen Ways Of Looking At A Blackbird." It's a philosophical and imagistic poem that bounces around a series of 13 distinct images. I'm discussing this here for two reasons: Alter Bridge's latest disc is entitled *Blackbird* and has 13 tracks, and I thought it was a funny coincidence; and every word I spend chatting about Stevens, I don't have to waste on actually talking about this album.

In case you're late to the scene, Alter Bridge is composed of those nice boys from Creed, except they dropped vocalist Scott Stapp and went looking for someone else, the criteria apparently being that he must sound exactly like Stapp did.

This is presumably to let them grow artistically. If it helps, I did enjoy the song on *Blackbird*, though I was confused as to why they played it nine times in a row. And then I realized that it's just that all the songs on *Blackbird* sound exactly alike. At first, I thought I was just mistaken;

surely this can't be. There are little lyrical and tempo differences here and there, and—oh, there's that screaming electric guitar solo, again. And there's that tricky drum rhythm. Again. And there's those growling, meaningless lyrics. Again. Alter Bridge takes ten tracks before they produce a different song, and by then, it's too late to save *Blackbird* from flying straight into the plate-glass window.

Overall, listening to *Blackbird* is like listening to *Guitar Hero* on Expert Mode. The songs are all really long and generic, and contain complex head-banging guitar solos that impress you for awhile but start to run together in a background noise kind of way. *Blackbird* is no "Freebird," sirs. You'd do well to remember that next time.

If I had to make a choice, I pick "Thirteen Ways of Looking At A Blackbird" over this album. At least Stevens' blackbirds don't all look identical.



albumreview

Selasee

Run
Running Dream Records

VANESSA HORNE
Arts & Entertainment Writer

For those that aren't planning a trip to Ghana in the near future, Selasee's first album, *Run*, is a good fill-in: as soon as the title track starts, you feel like you've been transported at least three countries south. Selasee fills *Run* with African instruments and lyrics, and mixes

American pop, reggae, and West African hi-life genres. The feel of the album is so warm and catchy that you can't help but bob to it.

The expertise of Selasee's songcraft is quite captivating, and it's getting him some acclaim, too: "Run," the

album's single, was chosen to be on the soundtrack of soccer game *FIFA 2006*. The lyrics are fairly simple, but in a good way—after only a couple of listens, you may find yourself singing along.

Run's small number of problems stem from the fact that the last few songs start to feel like elevator music due to the slow, repetitive tempo, and extended instrument solos.

Run is a decent first album, and Selasee expertly conveys his easy-going but passionate personality through his music. If you like reggae or world music, Selasee's musical excellence makes Ghana a feel little bit closer.

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PROFESSOR OF THE WEEK



BEHROOZ NOWROUZIAN
MARKETING 301

Dr. Nowrouzian, or 'Behrooz' as he prefers to be called, contributes a great deal to undergraduate studies by keeping his classes calm and personal. Behrooz always give you the feeling he is talking to you, rather than at you. Behrooz has quickly become a favorite [among] his second year students and should be recognized for it!

Do you have a professor that's unique and shows their value of undergraduate teaching? Nominate them! Email avpa@su.ualberta.ca.

Nominations can also be picked up and submitted at any Faculty Association or InfoLink desk, or the SU executive offices front desk.



Though you may not know it, David Bowie is not actually a cat. I know this because he's never puked on my carpet or woken me up with his incessant meowing.

Here at the Gateway, our carpets are 100-per-cent vomit-free, so drop by our **4pm Thursday meetings in 3-04 SUB** (unless you're a cat, cats are banned).



GATEWAY OPINION

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