

naKED

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES

- 3 Kalamazoo A Cappella Festival
The Gilmore 2012 5
- 7 - 8 Gibson Guitars
Scott Tribby: Kalamazoo's Own Luthier 9 - 10
- 11 Music Department Events in May TouHou 12
- 13 Levon Helm Tortoise 13
- 14 Jon Reeves

EVENTS

- 4 Mastodon and Opeth Now Now 6

REVIEWS

- 2 Daydream Nation
Forget The Times 2
- 4 Flying Colors Blunderbuss 6
- 12 Sweet Heart Sweet Light Weapons 13

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Cover Photo by Claire Fielder

SONIC YOUTH DAYDREAM NATION



If you get the chance, take a look at what our great nation considers "culturally significant." Coast on over to the Wikipedia page that lists all of the recordings or collections that have been submitted into the National Recording Registry and you'll see, among other legendary soundbites and songs, MLK's "I Have a Dream Speech," Eisenhower's D-day broadcast, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* by the Beatles, Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, "Tutti Frutti" by Little Richard, and darn near anything that anyone would ever deem "historically significant."

But in 2006, a critically acclaimed album unrecognized by the average music listener was submitted into the Registry. That's right; Sonic Youth's magnum opus *Daydream Nation* is agreed upon by the Library of Congress to be historically significant enough to be something representative of our nation and the culture of this earth. Seriously—how cool is that?

What makes *Daydream Nation* so significant is that it epitomizes the sound, aggression, and flavor of noise rock. Sure, you could say it's the insane amount of grinding feedback to the electric guitars, but that would be stating the obvious. No, no... *Daydream Nation* holds the spirit of noise in its very hands. That five-minute jam of pure noise in the middle of the seven-minute, forty-three-second behemoth "The Sprawl"? That's where this album is. In the middle of the album's 6th track between what can only be described as frontman Thurston Moore's howling (reverberating

with echo) and his literal thrashing at his guitar strings while drummer Steve Shelley goes haywire on the drums the way only a noise drummer can? That's where this album is. So much dissonance, so much chaos, yet all of it is methodized.

The album takes a few listens to warm up to, no doubt about it. The first time yours truly ever took a whack at it, I was truly alienated. But as soon as you stop taking Sonic Youth as just a band and think of them

as pioneers of contemporary avant-garde, it is only then that you can truly grasp this album by the guitar strings, which is, I'm sure, an applied method in its conception.

Daydream Nation is, simply put, Sonic Youth's greatest commercial release. It is their magnum opus, their *Sgt. Pepper*, their *Nevermind*. It remains near the top of many "Best of" lists due to its influence upon later alternative acts. It presents a perfect utopia of chaos and escapism into this chaos. It presents, dare I say, a nation for daydreamers. Feel free to do so while you give this one a listen. It's highly recommended by Uncle Sam. *Camden Krusec*



Sonic Youth, creative masterminds of *Daydream Nation*.

Soul Music Forget the Times



Filling up your earholes with saxophone squeals and ambient guitar meanderings comes the most recent musical construct from local band Forget The Times, released in late February. *Soul Music*, an exhibition in "free jazz" and "noise rock," is a canvas, a canvas painted in broad strokes of warbled guitar, blots of squealing saxophone, intermittent snap-spittles of snare drums, and lyrics moaned out of a supermarket loudspeaker through a garbled space transmission. While predictable in the sense that many of the songs begin with a diaspora amongst the various instruments being played, each song has its own trance-like ambience to its sound.

The opening track, "Romans In Storage," sets the album off with a Colombian-esque rhythm, filled with a whirl of bells and snares. It quickly devolves into a chant that envelops the end of the song. Odd moments like these are commonplace on the album. A clattering of cans, guitar chords akin to engine start-ups...expect sounds to be often out of place, but sometimes woven right back into the cloth.

Songs such as "The Basement To The Grave" showcase a zombie-like lo-fi, with grimy waves of guitar matched up with little bits of clanking and clangling here and there. Listeners may find themselves bobbing their heads back and forth with the distortion if they feel like taking a one-hour tour on this sea of noise. Don't expect to return anytime soon, however, as the lull of the undertones will eventually draw in and drink up those that dare to explore it. *Zac Clark*

Kalamazoo A Cappella Festival



Photo Credit: FermataKzoo

On April 13 and 14, the intimate black box of the Epic Theater in downtown Kalamazoo was ringing with the second annual Kalamazoo A Cappella Festival. It was organized by the a cappella group FermataKzoo, working with the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo. The festival featured all three of K's groups- the Kalamadudes, Limelights, and Premium Orange- as well as groups from Western Michigan University, Grand Valley State University, and non-collegiate local groups like FermataKzoo. Eight of the groups were from Kalamazoo, impressively showcasing the city's flourishing a capella scene.

Each group sang three or four songs, displaying their diversity and skill. The Kalamadudes kicked off the Saturday afternoon performance with great energy, singing songs like Simon and Garfunkel's hit "Cecelia." The crowd also loved Premium Orange and its songs "Jesus Land," "Breakfast at Tiffany's," and "Somebody I Used to Know." The Limelights were enchanting with their cool, jazzy rendition of "Moondance" that had everyone in the audience nodding and smiling.

The groups from Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids were GroVe! and Euphoria, both of which are co-ed groups. Euphoria captivated the audience with a soulful, exquisite rendition of "Feeling Good" by Nina Simone. GroVe! was upbeat and lively, with a lot of movement and clapping, which made their songs particularly engaging. Their performance of "Everybody" by Ingrid Michaelson was cheerful, carefree, and mood-lifting.

But don't think that only college kids can sing a cappella; the most humorous group of the night was Four Got to Shave, a barbershop quartet begun in 2002 by four men from Kalamazoo. They have performed at over 400 events within Kalamazoo, and they were both hilarious and extremely talented. They sang traditional songs like "I've Been Working on the Railroad," "Sittin' On Top of the World," and "Proud to be an American," incorporating comedy with their expressions, gestures, changes in voice, and acting. They had the audience laughing out loud, but also had beautiful close harmonies.

The last performance of the night was by

FermataKzoo, the co-ed group formed in Kalamazoo that helped to put the festival together. They sang the jolly song from the new Muppets movie, "Life's a Happy Song," and also did a beautiful rendition of "I'll Follow You into the Dark" by Death Cab for Cutie. One of their final songs was Rupert Holmes's "Escape (The Pina Colada Song)," with sassy background singers that had everyone laughing.

The groups from Western (The Broncords, No Strings Attached, and Mane Attraction) performed on Friday but not Saturday. Mane Attraction is all women and was only formed last year. No Strings Attached and Broncords are both co-ed groups; The Broncords are Western's oldest a cappella group, founded in 2007. Notified, another non-collegiate group performed Friday night. It was created by a group of friends in the community and has sung at venues all over southwest Michigan. Interestingly enough, none of the groups featured in the program, except for the barbershop quartet, were in existence five years ago. Kalamazoo's a cappella scene has prospered significantly, and events like this should keep it alive and thriving. *Laura Crouch*

Mastodon/Opeth @ The Intersection 4/14

As evidenced by the two-block line outside The Intersection in Grand Rapids on Saturday, April 14, Mastodon's failure to show at a meet-and-greet at Kalamazoo's Green Light Records earlier in the day had not

dissuaded the Georgian quartet's fans from attending their only Michigan date with their tourmates Opeth, along with special guests Ghost. Headliners Mastodon and Opeth were promoting their respective albums *The Hunter* and *Heritage*. Once the line finally got moving, concertgoers were quickly herded into the venue, where it became readily apparent that the show was very nearly, if not completely, sold out.

Eventually, the room darkened, smoke billowed, and five robed and hooded figures strode out and took their places with their respective instruments to the accompaniment of eerie chanting. Soon after, a man swinging a censer and dressed as, for lack of a better term, the Antipope, strode out to both cheers and slightly confused looks from those who were not familiar with Sweden's Ghost. The sextet played a solid set of what sounded remarkably like '70s metal with an added dash of doom and Satan for good measure, which, depending on the viewer, might have been ever so slightly detracted from by the band's outfits and theatrics, which, while fitting for the music and lyrical content, at points verged on silliness. Soon, though, they completed their "final ritual," as frontman Papa Emeritus called it, and vacated the stage. After the clearing

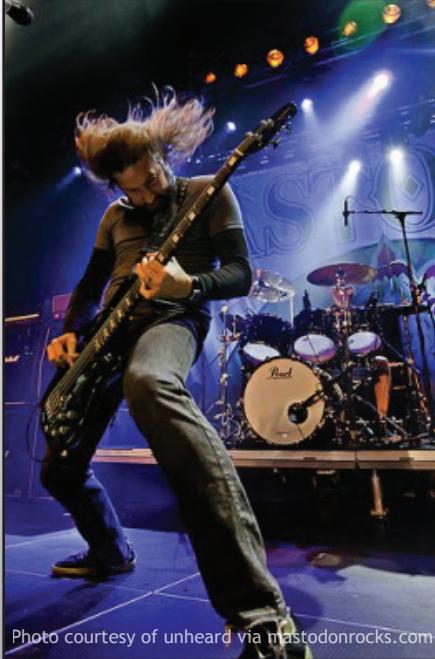


Photo courtesy of unheard via mastodonrocks.com

of some equipment, the stage was again occupied by their countrymen, the men of Opeth. As one of the tour's two headlining bands, they drew a bit more excitement from the crowd than the previous, lesser-known act. During their set, they mostly played material from their new album *Heritage*, an album comprised mostly of mellower prog rock than their previous death metal-influenced work. Near the end of the set, though, the quintet's frontman Mikael Åkerfeldt, who had been good-naturedly engaging the audience throughout the performance, complete with the occasional crack about the relative decline in their "metalness," unleashed his trademark growl as they launched into some of their earlier work, closing with just enough brutality to segue into Mastodon's appearance onstage. Like Opeth, they also mostly performed from their new album (*The Hunter*), but unlike the Swedes, a good deal of their old brutality had been retained in their latest release. For the better part of their set, the audience was a thrashing mess of limbs, moshers, and the occasional belligerent drunk being dragged out in a headlock by security. Forceful ejection aside, it was everything a metal show should be: dark, smoky, and just violent enough to make things interesting. *Bo Martin*

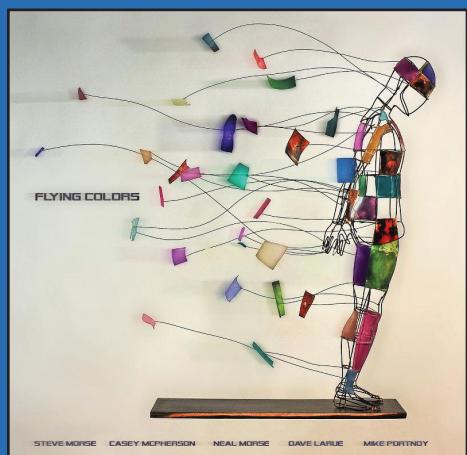


Photo courtesy of Daniel Falk

Top: Troy Sanders, bass player of Mastodon
Left: Opeth and audience

SELF TITLED, FLYING COLORS

Rock supergroups have become a recent fad, first with Chickenfoot taking the spotlight then on to an array of new joint ventures for high-profile rock musicians like Them Crooked Vultures and Black Country Communion. Some have worked as well as the fans would expect, but on average, the collective creativity of the musicians is not greater than the sum of its parts, sometimes even less. Fortunately, Flying Colors's self-titled debut is a direct hit on the bullseye. The band is comprised of ex-Dream Theater drummer Mike Portnoy, guitarist Steve Morse and bassist Dave LaRue (both of Dixie Dregs), keyboardist Neal Morse, and vocalist Casey McPherson. The instrumentalists are legendary for their virtuosity, but McPherson's power pop songwriting led the band's music into an accessible and concise form that is associated with pop music and classics. Each member's individual style is apparent, but they blend together smoothly like the balance of potent flavors in a Thai dish. The result is an incredibly diverse, dynamic, natural, well-composed, and well-performed collection of feel-good songs that can remind you of anyone from The Beatles to Queen to Velvet Revolver to Coldplay, each with a propensity to ring in your ears for days and weeks. *Supanat (Chris) Wachiralappaitoon*



STEVE MORSE CASEY MCPHERSON NEAL MORSE DAVE LARUE MIKE PORTNOY

Pink Martini at The Gilmore

To describe the tiny travelling orchestra Pink Martini as a "world music band" would be accurate, but not in the normal sense of the phrase. The 12-piece orchestra and its lead vocalist China Forbes perform arias in Italian, swing band songs in Spanish, and Broadway-style numbers belted in French, English, and occasionally Japanese. Three of their albums have gone gold in Canada, France, Greece, and Turkey. They have played at the Boston Pops, performed with the London Symphony, and won Song of the Year and Best New Artist awards in France's "Victoires de la Musique" Award ceremony for their debut album, *Sympathique*; and they're not even French!

The band, which originates from Portland, Oregon, is characterized by a full and varied sound, thanks to the strength and flexibility of their tiny orchestral set-up. The majority of their songs are lyrical, carried by China Forbes's clear, vivacious, and spritely vocals. They have a number of strictly instrumental songs though which have become quite famous: "Song of the Black Swan," a morose violin piece over

haunting piano from their second album, and "No Hay Problema," which sounds like something straight out of a Havana cantina and was featured in the 2002 film *Slackers*, among others. Their style tends towards jazz and swing, with heavy influence from classical arias (classical melodic vocal lines over orchestral backing) and traditional folk songs.

Pink Martini will be bringing their infectious "world music" sound to Kalamazoo on May

one of the keyboard aficionados who will be pulling in the attention of music-lovers during the festival. Among other headline acts are young pianist Charlie Albright, who replaced Yo Yo Ma as Harvard University's Leverett Artist-In-Residence, and Vanessa Perez, who received a full scholarship to the London Conservatory when she was only seventeen. Kalamazoo College's own Music Department Chair, Leslie Tung, will also be giving a solo recital on May 11th as part of the festival.

For readers who are hoping to get a taste of Pink Martini's smooth sound before the concert, their most recent album, *A Retrospective*, is a great place to start, considering it is a look back at their 15-year career and includes both fan favorites and unreleased tracks. For more information on the Gilmore Festival, including a list of other events and artists and ticket prices, readers can visit TheGilmore.com. Tickets for all events sell out quickly, so interested parties should make sure to reserve their seats as soon as possible. *Alana Mancuso*



11th

as part of the three-week long Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, beginning April 26th and continuing through May 12th. The festival, which occurs every two years in Kalamazoo, is well known for the world-renowned classical and jazz piano artists and other musicians it brings into their program. Thomas Lauderdale, Pink Martini's bandleader and pianist, is only

PINK MARTINI A RETROSPECTIVE



Whether you are familiar with the band Pink Martini or looking for an introduction, *A Retrospective* is a CD worth buying. As the band's first compilation album, *A Retrospective* functions as something of a revamped Greatest Hits collection, looking back on the band's 18-year career. It contains songs from all six of their previous albums, such as their very first breakout hit "Sympathique" from the 1997 album of the same name. It's not all repeats, though; there's still some new stuff for the old fans. Previously unreleased tracks, such as Pink Martini's revamped version of "Moon River" and "The Man with the Big Sombrero," are there too. The album also boasts the never-before-released first studio takes of their hits "Una Notte a Napoli" and "Aspettami," and two remixes of their songs as well. Altogether, the album is a nostalgic romp for old fans and an ideal sampler for new ones. *Alana Mancuso*

BLUNDERBUSS



Jack White is finding it harder to be a gentleman. Detroit's eccentric rock 'n' roll prodigal son has finally unleashed his first solo album, entitled *Blunderbuss*, and it's rude as hell. Gone are the days of bandmates, collaborations, and peppermint color schemes; this album is pure, unadulterated Jack White songwriting, and now everything is blue. A balanced yet unpredictable blend of White's country, rock, and bluesy tendencies, only an album like *Blunderbuss* could have relieved the collective boner that has been building for years across White's diverse fan base.

Having recently undergone both a divorce and the breakup of the White Stripes in little over a year, *Blunderbuss*'s lyrics make clear that White feels wronged by the women in his life. And he has a lot to say about it, in a style more relentlessly biting than ever. On the guitar-shredding third track "Freedom at 21," White sings of a sadistic lover: "Cut off the bottoms of my feet and make me walk on salt, a smile on her face, she does what she wants to me... she's got freedom in the 21st century." Later, on the furiously cheerful "Hip (Eponymous) Poor Boy," White brazenly disses ex-bandmate and ex-wife Meg White: "And you'll be watching me girl, takin' over the world, let the stripes unfurl, gettin' rich singin' Poor boy, boy."

But the album has many other selling points besides its lyricism. Delicate piano melodies, angry guitar riffs, and danceable bass lines pervade the songs and create a varied listening experience. The album finishes with "Take Me With You When You Go" a soulful, upbeat summary of its contents that ranges from gospel-like ballad elements to a mournful fiddle, to an abrupt guitar solo. The song's title words end the album on an unsure note, leaving the listener wondering where exactly they are going. Catchy and adequately edgy, *Blunderbuss* will please but not surprise its audience, and now successfully functions as the present culmination of White's creative forces. *Zoe Beaudry*

Now Now:

April 7 @ the Division Avenue Art Collective



Photo Courtesy of origamimusic.blogspot.com

Now, Now, the Indie Trio who played at the Division Avenue Art Collective

In a homey, little space meant to hold no more than a hundred people, a trio of regional bands rocked out, showcasing different genres and fashion senses. A night meant to celebrate local musicians, what the show lacked in grandeur it compensated for by creating an atmosphere of intimacy often overlooked in today's music scene.

The DAAC (Division Avenue Art Collective), sandwiched between a record store and apartment buildings in bustling downtown Grand Rapids, is not much larger than a typical classroom. The crowd that showed up this Easter weekend was only in the double digits, but in such a small area the room was easily filled from wall to wall. Two openers, the Scare Seasons and Circle Maybe, set the scene by playing a variety of rock and punk music. The lead singer for Circle Maybe implored the audience to understand the importance of supporting local bands, and how they can't make it without local support. The DAAC may not see high-profile bands, have the most expensive equipment, or have the space for thousands, but what it lacks in material goods it makes up for in a strong sense of community. The people who attended the event included friends and family of the bandmates, music lovers, and people just looking for a good time.

Now, Now, a pop-indie trio from Minnesota, was the headliner. With only three musicians (dual girl guitarists and a drummer), Now, Now is not extremely

complex, but they proved to be distinctly unique despite their simplicity. Churning guitar riffs, soft melodies, and an emphasis on vocals that express the angst and emotions associated with growing up in a world where not everyone is accepted for what they are, help set Now, Now above the crowd of crooning emo-indie bands. Now, Now is signed to Death Cab for Cutie member Chris Walla's label Trans, and the comparisons between Now, Now and Death Cab are quite easy to make. Their tunes are highly introspective and easy on the ears, but they also dip into dark thematic material. Now, Now chattered away on stage, cracking jokes and having a good time, but their songs reflect a subtle sadness, like "Friends With My Sister," which tells the story of a mother kicking her daughter out of their home for being a lesbian. Despite these depressing themes, each song is accompanied by a strong sense of hope that pierces through the darkness. Songs would begin with ambient noises and slight palm-muting and then explode into a barrage of drums and power chords. Being deeply emotional but not overtly complex is Now, Now's keystone.

Although there were technical problems (malfunctioning mics, askew volume levels), the bands chugged on and the crowd ate it up. Low-key but enjoyable, the show was a testament to the fact that there is always good music around for those with open ears and minds. *Aaron Bunker*



-A Kalamazoo Company-

Gibson Guitar Corporation is a world-famous guitar company that makes the signature guitars popularized by musicians from Wes Montgomery to Jimmy Page, from B.B. King to George Harrison. The company was started in our city of Kalamazoo by the shoemaker and amateur musician Orville Gibson, who decided in 1894 that he would make a new style of mandolin and guitar.

Without any formal training, Gibson perfected a way to hand-carve a mandolin from a single block of wood. His mandolins were known for their carved and arched tops, akin to violins. Despite using old furniture wood, he created more durable and higher quality instruments than the competition.

All this led to a huge demand, and local businessmen were persuaded to invest. In 1902 they established the Gibson Mandolin Guitar Mfg. Co., Ltd. to meet the rising demand of Gibson mandolins onwards to World War I, when mandolin orchestras were popular. Despite Gibson's death in 1918, the company increased its production, improved its products, and developed new models in its factory on 225 Parsons St.

In 1921 Gibson employee Thaddeus

McHugh invented two important innovations that are still used today. These are the adjustable truss rod, which runs through the inside of the wooden neck of the guitar, and the height-adjustable bridge, which determines the distance of the strings from the bottom to the top.

In the late 1930s Gibson began exploring the concept of electric guitars so that guitarists could compete in volume with large orchestras or jazz bands. Gibson made the first hollow body guitar in 1936, the Gibson ES-150, complete with an arched top, f-holes, and a pickup. By World War II, banjos were in high demand by the public, and Gibson's products continued to reflect the demand.

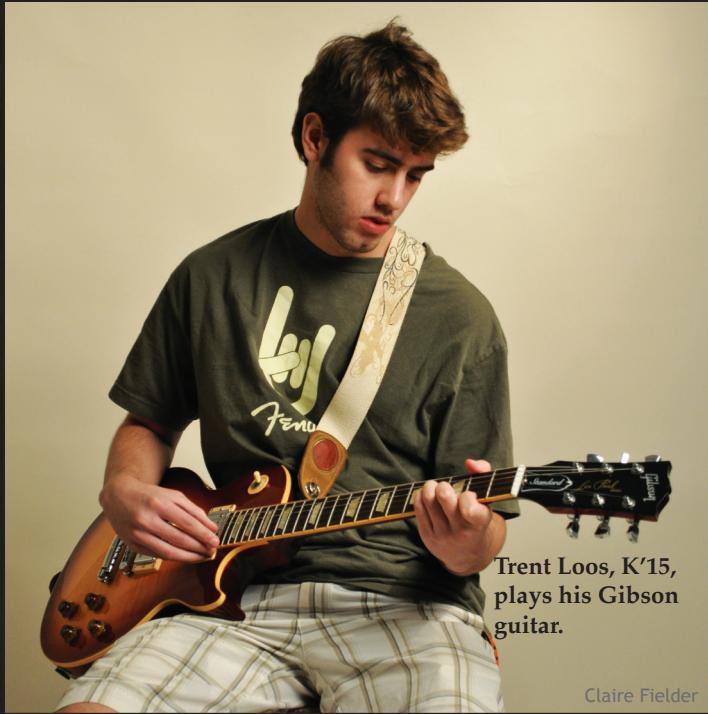
During the war, Gibson produced wood parts for military needs while manufacturing fewer instruments. Additionally, Gibson employed many residents of Kalamazoo who were able to contribute to the war effort.

The company chose a new president in 1950, Ted McCarty, an engineer who did not know how to play guitar. However, he achieved success by asking musicians what they wanted in a guitar.

The guitar-maker and musician Les Paul approached Gibson with the idea of making a solid-body guitar, but the company did not approve the idea. In 1951, the competitor brand Fender made their first solid-body model, the Esquire, a precursor to the iconic Telecaster. The following year Gibson released the Les Paul model, which remains one of the world's most recognizable guitars. The Les Paul design continued to gain popularity in the mid '60s, when legends like Eric Clapton used the instrument. In the 1950s Gibson created pick-ups, such as the humbucker, which are standard in guitar construction today.

Gibson blended the resonance of the hollow-body guitar and the bite and sustain of the solid-body guitar in 1958, creating the first semi-hollow-body guitar. Part solid, part hollow, B.B. King employed this guitar in shaping his signature blues sound.

In the McCarty years, Gibson increased production from 5,000 guitars a year to more than 100,000 in 1965, reaching its record production. According to a 1969 article in the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, then-Director of Customer Relations and Quality Control Wilbur Marker said, "We may have changed considerably in the last 75 years, but Orville Gibson's insistence on quality remains unchanged."



Trent Loos, K'15,
plays his Gibson
guitar.

Claire Fielder

Guitar sales climbed following World War II, but they boomed in the 1960s. In fact, by the 1960s Gibson, according to a 1964 article in the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, could "boast of having the world's largest guitar factory in terms of plant space, size of payroll, and

difficult relationship with its labor union; while narrowing its lineup to mainly electric guitars, they experienced excess production. Finally, in 1984, the Parsons street factory closed after 65 years of production. Despite Gibson's expansion in

dollars sales." And this was before it undertook a 40,000 foot expansion later that year.

After Gibson's electric guitars gained popularity through a host of famous rock musicians in the '60s, the company began shifting its operations from Kalamazoo to Nashville. In 1974 the Tennessee plant opened, and production became split between Nashville and Kalamazoo.

Gibson held a difficult relationship with its labor union; while narrowing its lineup to mainly electric guitars, they experienced excess production. Finally, in 1984, the Parsons street factory closed after 65 years of production. Despite Gibson's expansion in

Nashville, it endured financial troubles in the following years due to inexperienced workers and the humid climate conditions.

The 225 Parsons factory is still here, but is now owned by Heritage Guitars Inc., founded by former Gibson employees. They base their guitars on the Gibson design, but they invoke the early Gibson roots by paying attention to detail and presenting a more "hand-made" instrument.

Only ten years ago, Gibson invented the digital guitar, which produces digital signals. It can select the output of each string individually; a guitarist can adjust the volume, equalization, and separate effects of each string. In 2007 the company released the robot guitar, which can automatically tune itself in seconds, is capable of alternate tunings, and features a restring mode.

Gibson continues to explore the possibilities of music and expand technology with the most advanced guitars in the world. Gibson guitars transformed rock and jazz music, its efforts and entrepreneurship are celebrated in American history, and the Gibson legacy remains a gem in the city of Kalamazoo.

Colin Smith



A Gibson Les Paul guitar in its case.

Claire Fielder

SCOTT TRIBBY KALAMAZOO'S OWN LUTHIER



Ian Geiman

I remember being happily surprised that Kalamazoo had its very own luthier (stringed instrument craftsman) when I first visited the town looking at colleges a few years ago. As a member of Naked Magazine and a violinist, I was glad to have the chance to interview Scott Tribby, a luthier who creates a variety of instruments in the violin family. He has worked in downtown Kalamazoo, creating and repairing for 22 years, and fixes up instruments and bows from all over the Midwest. Trained at the Violin Making School of America in Salt Lake City, Kalamazoo is lucky to have him right downtown.

Naked Magazine: What was the school in Salt Lake City like? What is it called?

Scott Tribby: The Violin Making School of America. There are two really prominent schools in the U.S., one is in Chicago and the other is in Salt Lake City. It was kind of interesting, 60 Minutes did an article on the school in Salt Lake City, and at that time I was teaching in the public schools and I decided, man, that's what I want to do. So I went out there, interviewed, and they took me. At that time I was in my early 20s, and I'll tell you, Utah is a great place to live if you like skiing and whitewater rafting and all the other stuff, that's a pretty cool place to live.

NM: So the 60 Minutes interview was your inspiration for getting

into violin making?

ST: Yeah, I liked woodworking, I was always into that, of course I played viola. It's kind of a marriage of the two things I was most into at the time, but I really liked woodworking, and that school was just the perfect thing for me at the time.

NM: So it's a good position being in Kalamazoo?

ST: Actually, I deal with people from Grand Rapids, Lansing, Jackson, South Bend, Fort Wayne, Chicago... I mean, it's kind of interesting because the people here in town don't realize how lucky they have it, to just walk down to my office and have their bow re-haired, because I have people come from the middle of Indiana -- 6 hours to come get their bow rehaired. So I do a lot of other work apart from the Kalamazoo people.

NM: How do you get your name out? Do people hear about you from other instrumentalists?

IG: Yeah that's pretty much it. I used to advertise a lot; I used to do more making. In fact it was strictly making for 10 years or so. So I've made over 300 instruments now, all over the U.S. and some in Europe, and that's word of mouth. If you have an instrument out there and it sounds nice, someone will hear it and play it, and they'll want one too. The repair end is interesting too, that's word of mouth. Bow re-hairs for instance. It's about the most complicated, tricky thing that I do. It looks really simple, but to do a really good bow re-hair takes a lot of practice and there are not very many people that are very good at it, so I get people from all over that want re-hairs. But if you screw up a bow, if you start out in the business and mess something up, that gets out there, fast. Then people avoid you like the plague. It really is word of mouth. I used to spend \$1000 a year advertising. I don't even do that anymore; I don't need it; I get enough work.

NM: Do you keep track of your instruments?

IG: I really should, but I don't at all. Its crazy, I'll have an instrument come in that I made 25 years ago, and I haven't seen it since, and that's really kind of neat. My style of making and my tastes have changed a bit over time, and it's interesting to see what I was doing that long ago.

NM: How long does it take to make an instrument?

IG: I'm at the point now where I can make one without varnish on it in about 35 hours, and that's flying. At this violin-making school, they had you make the first three instruments you make at once. It took me a year to make those. And they looked horrible; they were just disastrous. That's what I usually tell these kids at the violin-making school, I say, 'You know, get the first three out of the way. They are going to look horrible, and you are going to make a lot of mistakes. Get it done, then you know what you have to do.' I'll spend a month varnishing, depending on what kind of varnish I'm using, but you want it to dry. You don't want to stick it in a case and have the case come off on you.

NM: What is some of your favorite music?

IG: That's an interesting question. I listen to a lot of stuff, I listen to just about everything. I've got a daughter that's a Music major at Western. She's a vocalist and trumpet-player, so I listen to a lot of that stuff. I listen to a lot of classical, but really if I'm in my car, it'll be classic rock. I was talking to somebody from the symphony here: "How really exciting it was to be in a symphony orchestra back

when we were in our 20's because all that music was new, Brookner Symphonies and Mahler and Stravinski, all the really heavy-duty stuff. And it was exciting to go into these rehearsals: 'Oh my god we're doing this Mahler second symphony, this is really cool'" - but we played it so many times now it gets kind of ho-hum. And when I turn the radio on, I don't even listen to classical music anymore, I'm kind of cynical. I mean, how many times can you hear Beethoven's 9th symphony? Ian Geiman



Ian Geiman



MUSIC DEPARTMENT EVENTS IN MAY!

Wednesday, May 9th

**6:30 pm - Turner Voice
Area Class #2**

Sunday, May 13th

**4:00 pm - Symphonic Band
Concert**

Monday, May 14th

**7:30 pm - Lakers/Schreck
Area Class #2**

Tuesday, May 15th

**4:30 pm - String Area Class
#2**

Wednesday, May 16th

**7:15 pm - Miller Memorial
Concert**

Thursday, May 17th

**6:30 pm - Keyboard Area
Class #2**

Friday, May 18th

**8:00 pm - Jazz Band
Concert**

Saturday, May 19th

**8:00 pm - Kalamazoo
Philharmonia Concert**

Sunday, May 20th

**4:00 pm - College Singers
and Women's Ensemble
Concert**

Tuesday, May 22nd

**6:00 pm - Wind, Percus-
sion, Brass Area Class #2
7:30 pm - International
Percussion Ensemble Con-
cert**

Tuesday, May 29th

**7:00 pm - Harp Studio
Recital**

Wednesday, May 30th

**12:00 pm - String
Methods Class Concert
4:00 pm - Music
Department Applied
Recital**

Touhou: The Largest Nerd Music Scene You've Never Heard Of

A few years back, I stumbled upon a music video for a Japanese song called "Bad Apple." The video was done in black and white with no shades in between, creating figures through silhouette images. Amazed and intrigued, I dug deeper. What I found was a computer game series called Touhou Project.

In 1995 the first Touhou game was released for the PC-98 computer. The games were of the danmaku, or "bullet curtain" genre. The best way I've found to explain the genre is as follows: imagine a classic arcade-style shoot-'em-up game like *Galaga* or *1942*. In those games, the goal is to maneuver your ship out of the way of incoming projectiles. In a danmaku game, the goal could be more accurately described as moving your ship into the areas that aren't bullets. As the PC-98 was somewhat obscure in Japan and almost completely unknown outside the country, the Touhou series didn't gain much attention until moving over to the Windows operating system in 2002. The sixth game in the series, *Touhou: The Embodiment of Scarlet Devil*, became wildly popular in both Japan and the West.

The Touhou Project is the work of a single individual: Jun'ya Ono, both referred to and credited as ZUN. He is responsible for the programming, writing, art, and music behind each Touhou game. In a rare interview for the Touhou book *Bohemian Archive in Japanese Red*, ZUN described the process, saying, "At the

base of everything is the game world, and I structure the game's genre and system upon that, from which the pictures and the music flows." That music has inspired thousands of fans to compose their own covers and songs inspired by the game.

Allow me to give another personal account. Soon after discovering Touhou, I went in search of some of the music. As it is impossible to purchase Touhou albums in the USA, I (regrettably) had to find an online torrent, which contained 116 albums. After downloading, I noticed a text file in the folder. It read, "A compilation of 116 Touhou soundtracks from Comic Market 75(Dec.08), released on January 5th, 2009." What I thought was a complete collection turned out to be a collection of albums released at a single event. There is a genuinely frightening amount of Touhou music out there. The largest collection I could find as of publication contains 4600 individual albums and grows with each fan convention held in Japan. They cover every genre imaginable, from techno to metal to J-pop to classical Japanese instrumentals.

Why you might ask, would there possibly be so many albums inspired by a series of computer games? It's hard to pinpoint any exact reason, but one thing is certain: the Touhou fanbase is BIG. On top of music, fans produce thousands of comics based on Touhou characters as well as a large number of entirely fan-made tribute games. It could be that, to the Japanese gamer, Touhou is an incredibly appealing game. It combines extreme difficulty with music and visuals good enough to keep the player trying again and again. Perhaps this is the same reason so many renditions of Touhou music have spawned among its fans, as they try again and again to find that perfect blend of sounds to encompass this cult phenomenon. *Adam Eisenstein*



A collage of characters from the Touhou videogame series.

SWEET HEART SWEET LIGHT SPIRITUALIZED

Sweet Heart Sweet Light, by Spiritualized is a refreshing combination of the old and the new. Written while founder and sole controller Jason Pierce was under the influence of experimental liver drugs, the album is at times surprisingly well produced and adorned with orchestral and choral arrangements and at others threatens to break down into a mess of distortion. "Headin' for the Top Now" is filled with droning hazy guitars, brazen electronics, and Pierce's lazy, languid voice, all of which are characteristics of the space rock genre upon which he draws heavily. Directly after, "Freedom" is composed of soft guitar and piano, accompanied by lulling melodies from Pierce and various string instruments. The album transitions seamlessly from chaos to tranquility and then back again. Each song has its own hooks and appeal, like the sappy sweet lyrics and string melodies of "Too Late," that make each unique and as a whole create an atmosphere that lulls and holds the listener.

Although quite original, the album is indebted to Pierce's influences. The Velvet Underground has its prints all over *Sweet Heart*, from Lou Reed's rough voice and lyrics about sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll to John Cale's embellishments. Pierce adds his own touches by adding elements of shoe-gaze and soulful melodies to help differentiate himself from the titans that influenced him so strongly.

The mix of rock and roll, hazy guitar work, string additions, and other elements make for an album that is quite up and down. That could be attributed to Pierce's mind state during production, but regardless, he successfully balanced these elements and created a solid album.

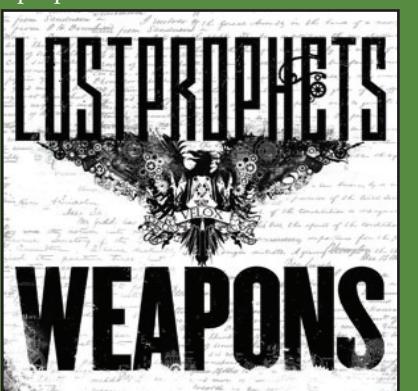
Aaron Bunker

Huh?

This IS the album cover, by the way. We double-checked.

WEAPONS LOSTPROPHETS

The Lostprophets have been changing their sound long since their first album release, 2000's *The Fake Sound of Progress*, but their recently released album Weapons is the first step back the band has taken in over a decade. As always, there are a few appealing hits, but the rest of the songs that would normally support the album as a whole simply fail to bring the album together. The band seems to be shying away from the grittier sound they developed in their last album, *The Betrayed*, instead returning to the more pop-rock style they had before. *Weapons*'s high points are "Better Off Dead," and "Bring 'Em Down," which both retain the gritty style, but the remaining songs have none of the vigor that marks earlier Lostprophets work. The song "Somedays" is the laid-back hit of the album, with gentle guitar and vocals by lead singer Ian Watkins creating a fast-moving track that begs to be set on repeat. At ten tracks, the album feels short, and even the addition of a trio of "Garage Sessions" tracks in the deluxe edition isn't enough to make the album feel whole. *Weapons* doesn't compare to the draw of the last few albums, which could play from start to finish and feel like long, cohesive stories. This marks yet another shift in how the band approaches their music, and though I consider myself an avid fan, where they go from here is up in the air as always. While worth a listen, their previous albums continue to be the standard for what the Lostprophets can do. *Ian Geiman*



Sad Tortoise is sad. Why? Because we were supposed to review the Tortoise show on April 25 at the Grand Rapid's Pyramid Scheme but...we didn't (apparently it was excellent!). So instead, here is a picture of a judgmental tortoise and one of the show. You're welcome.



In Loving Memory of Levon Helm

Why do the best things always disappear?" sang Levon Helm, member of The Band in the song "Ophelia." On April 19, the multi-instrumentalist Levon Helm passed away during his final battle with throat cancer. His unique ability to simultaneously drum and sing with a country-inflected voice will be missed, but unlike Ophelia, he won't disappear. That is, not if you commemorate this weekend by listening to The Band. Helm recorded 12 albums with The Band, two of which with Bob Dylan, and a handful of solo albums. Better yet, watch *The Last Waltz*, The Band's legendary farewell performance featuring artists such as Eric Clapton, Neil Young, and Bob Dylan (just to name a few). Two days before he passed away, Helm's wife and daughter said, "He has loved nothing more than to play, to fill the room up with music, lay down the back beat, and make people dance!" So please, make sure you dance this weekend, it's what Levon would want. *Colin Smith*

A JOURNEY THROUGH MUSIC COMPOSITION WITH JON REEVES

The Kalamazoo College's Cirque Du K strives to amuse, amaze, and astound its audience, and the level of spectacle built into this year's spring performance seemed to be well received. Not only did the juggling, aerial silk, and ground acrobatics provide their usual level of excitement to the show, but the inclusion of an original score, composed by K's very own Visiting Instructor of Theatre Arts, Jon Reeves, added a new layer of sensory experience for the audience.

"[An original score] adds just that little extra magic. Because of movies, sound is so important, and we hear it so much that

An original score adds just that little extra magic.

when it isn't there we're confused, and when we recognize it sometimes it jars us out of where we are," said Reeves. He added, "having something new lets people experience in the show in a different way."

Having the option to feature an original score as the music to a production is often desirable, but Reeves, who has written a variety of scores for the theatre department at K (most recently Shakespeare's *The Tempest*) knows that there is a process to finding the music that works not only for the composer but for the participants in the show itself. In the case of Cirque's spring performance, a dialogue between the composer and the performers existed from



Jon Reeves working on the sound board.

the start.

"I knew that they were doing fairy tales, and I had a sense of fairy-tale music. But what I did first was give [Cirque] a selection of styles that I had composed music with in the past, from very heavy classical to electronica to rock 'n' roll to a country bluegrass kinda feel," he said. "They ended picking an ethereal classical style, which I think makes perfect sense for fairy tales."

From there, Reeves was given a rough estimate of time for each movement in the show, as well as key story points that would set the tone for various parts of the

performance. From this point, it became a matter of creating the music that would ideally fit the show within the parameter given by Cirque.

When asked how he came to his particular style of "ethereal classical music," Reeves responded, "I think a lot of it was probably just in my head... I watch a lot of movies, so there's always movie scores in my head, but I'm really inspired by Basil Poledouris, who did the music for a lot of the Conan [the Barbarian] stuff, and I'm also influenced by Danny Elfman and a lot of the work he did for Tim Burton."

By the time the ideas seem tangible, Reeves says he begins his work, like many composers, at the piano. "I start with my thoughts in piano, and from there it's really a lot of messing around on melody or on a pattern that I like, and then I immediately start recording at that point. Once I'm satisfied with the piano, then I decide what instrumentation needs to go over that, and start adding the cellos and the violas and the shimmer sounds."

By the end of this three-week process, the score is completed and ready for the stage. While this may seem like a rather fast pace to compose such a large work, Reeves said that it can be great practice for anyone like him looking to keep his skills sharp, or even better practice for local K students looking to break into the composing field. He encourages any students interested in this field to help compose music for student productions. "I think for a lot of young composers, this kind of experience really gives them a feel for what the 'real world' of composing is." Jacob Berenson



