

Now Hear This

Three new CDs welcome the Northwest summer

BY SARA FREEDMAN

Friend and Foe

Menomena

(BARSUK, 2007)

It's no secret that some of the most innovative bands in the country have emerged out of the north I-5 corridor. Portland's Menomena continues the tradition, carrying the indie/pop/experimental rock flame into the 21st Century. Menomena is Danny Seim, Justin Harris and Brent Knopf, and their textured, post-rock offerings place soulful musings over sounds of crashing drums, hi and lo guitars, and shots of horn, keyboard and organ with the help of their handcrafted digital looping recorder. This album, *Friend and Foe*, is at times wistfully melodic ("My My"), at times forcefully chaotic ("The Pelican"), and mostly just plain killer ("Wet and Rusting"). P.S.: You'll want to purchase this CD at the record store and hold it in your hand so you can check the beautifully intricate, diorama-esque cover art carefully designed by graphic novelist Craig Thompson.

Hey Eugene!

Pink Martini

(HEINZ RECORDS, 2007)

No, the new album from Portland favorite Pink Martini is not a shout-out to our fair city. Rather, it's lead singer China Forbes's homage to that all-too-familiar dating ritual: the guy who gets your number at a party and never calls. "I was perplexed, because we had such a great connection," says Forbes of the man called Eugene. For more than a decade, Jones and Pink Martini founder Thomas Lauderdale have led one of the state's most beloved ensembles, a 10-piece entourage that has been classified as loungy, cabaret, jazzy, Latin, world—and above all, extremely talented. *Hey Eugene!* is no exception to the Pink Martini inclusiveness genre; French, Russian, Japanese and Arabic influences are part of the groovy mix.



Because of the Times

Kings of Leon

(RCA, 2007)

Summertime means barbecue, Budweiser and road trips, and *Because of the Times* is the perfect album to spin as the soundtrack to all that warm-weather debauchery. These Tennessee boys put out authentic rock and roll, a combination of '70s classic style with a garage-band flair and a touch of bluesy soul. Kings of Leon is Caleb, Jared and Nathan Followill, brothers who spent much of their youth traveling around the rural South with their father, Leon, a Pentecostal minister. After their parents divorced, the boys headed to Nashville, where they hooked up with their cousin Matthew, and the band was born. Their eclectic third album is firmly rooted in the Southern rock tradition, with hints of Pearl Jam, the Strokes and even a little gospel—perfect for sitting on the front porch or driving really fast with the windows rolled down, and just about everything else in between.