

Music

A Little Drop of Poison

Jack-of-all-trades Andrew Goldfarb brings his macabre one-man band and medicine show to town

By Carla Ferreira

The Slow Poisoner's music is strange, to say the least. Think midnight in a graveyard, but with a playful rhythm. Or "a cross between David Bowie and Johnny Cash—like a hoedown on Mars." This is how Andrew Goldfarb describes his eccentric one-man band, which features one man singing, strumming a guitar and kicking a bass drum.

Not content with just making sounds onstage, the San Franciscan also creates artwork—acrylic on cardboard—that he displays to illustrate the name and vibe of each song. And the songs offer ample opportunity for illustration. Take "Magic Casket" (also the name of his latest album), with throaty, monotone vocals, Goldfarb sings: "If there's no feathers on your wing/Just flap your exoskeleton" and "I worked a nightshift with a syphilis kiss."

Meshing the macabre and surreal with 1950s rock, Goldfarb counts Elvis Presley and Salvador Dalí as his biggest inspirations. But sometimes those inspirations don't play well with others. Case in point, The Slow Poisoner used to be The Slow Poisoners, a five-man outfit. But as the years passed, the numbers dwindled. In 2003 the self-proclaimed control-freak and part-time substitute teacher started his own record label,



Voodoo rock: Andrew Goldfarb puts a spell on you.

Rocktopus Records. Goldfarb has been performing solo since 2005, with three albums and a fourth—let's call it rock-opera-esque—on the way.

But when you go to Goldfarb's show, you get more than just a performance. His merch table is like a bizarre bazaar. He makes and sells, for example, medicine, acrylic-on-velvet paintings and a comic book series called *Ogner Stump's 1,000 Sorrows*. The Genuine Slow Poisoner Miracle Tonic's label says it cures "consumption and Elephantiasis, barnacle and boils, lavender fever, disinterested bladder and general wasting." The effectiveness of the medicine is questionable, but the probability of having fun, or at least being entertained, is as good as guaranteed. ■

10 p.m. Dec. 4, *Meatheads*, 1121 S. Decatur Blvd., \$5, 870-4440. Music available on iTunes; Ogner Stump series available on Amazon.

Soundscaper

Who killed Robert Johnson?

By Jarret Keene



I barely survived Thanksgiving weekend, a veritable gauntlet of overcooked turkey, overbearing family members and overloud metal bands. Everything was cranked to 11, except for my sleep and relaxation levels. Feeling better now, or maybe my mood is brightened by another dynamic week of live music in Las Vegas. Check it out.

Like some modern-day, totally insane CCR, San Francisco's **The Stone Foxes** are bringing their muddy, swampy, rump-shaking, super-cocky off-brand of blues-rock to **House of Blues** on Dec. 3. By super-cocky, all I mean is that it's not every band that possesses the cojones to write a song called "I Killed Robert Johnson" and expect to get away with it. The reason the Foxes haven't been arrested for crimes against music is not because the song is funny, but because it kills—the main riff is like a pistol whip across the face. Fans of music as varied as Dead Weather, Phish and The Black Crowes will love this. The Stone Foxes are, more than anything, a live band. But if you can't make it, at least check out their self-titled debut, *Bears & Bulls*.

Portland, Ore.'s cheekiest, most notorious alt-rock band, **The Dandy Warhols**, are coming to the **Hard Rock Café** on Dec. 8 in support of their recently released compilation CD, *The Capitol Years 1995-2007*. Although the Warhols' feigned could-care-less attitude has always sucked and kept them a second-tier act, they can write some seriously good tunes, including their breakout single, "Not If You Were the Last Junkie on Earth." Another great reason to hit the Hard Rock that night is opening act and fellow Portlanders **Blue Giant**. I positively reviewed this band's debut self-titled CD in *Vegas Seven's* July 8 issue, and my impression hasn't changed. Their clever lyrics, heartfelt delivery and full-on alt-country arrangements are impossible to dislike. They don't have much in common with the Warhols, but the Giant's genuine passion for old-school country in the George Jones/George Strait tradition will no doubt impress even the crowd of post-ironic hipsters.

On Dec. 9, electro-laptop-pop outfit **Passion Pit** from Cambridge, Mass., stops at **House of Blues** to inject a dose of its infectious music, mostly from its 2009 tour de force debut album *Manners* (Frenchkiss Records). It offers a joyous, '80s-era vibe that's at once danceable, hypnotic and life-affirming. Despite the cotton-candy drum loops and synth charges, there's an underlying darkness that runs throughout, which causes Passion Pit to linger in your mind like an eerie nightmare. Lately, the band has been performing a cover of the Cranberries' "Dreams" that—believe it or not—absolutely crushes the original. Fans of M83, Ratatat, Neon Indian and other electronic-enhanced rock groups better not miss this show.

Ahhh, I can feel the tryptophan fading away already. Time to buy tickets, and since the holidays are coming, maybe I'll even purchase a few for my friends! ■

What concerts will you be seeing this weekend? Send your holiday wish-lists to jarret_keene@yahoo.com.

Slow Poisoner photo by Jim Ferreira

Concert Preview

Country Singer Josh Gracin

A mere seven years ago, country singer and father of four Josh Gracin, 30, placed fourth in *American Idol*. And he has been fighting his good fortune ever since. "I face quite a bit of negativity," he says of the way he is viewed by the "tightknit group" in Nashville. "The only way to separate myself from the idea that I got lucky was to write and produce my album."

He's doing just that with his aptly named third album, *Redemption*, which will be released in 2011 on the label Average Joes Entertainment.

Gracin is coming to Las Vegas to perform an acoustic set at The Pub at Monte Carlo (11 p.m. Dec. 4, \$20, 730-7777). Since he was in the neighborhood, the National Finals Rodeo asked him to sing the national anthem the same day—an honor he was happy to accept.

While Gracin seems to have earned his place in the country music clique, he'd still like another chance to prove himself. "I'd definitely be on *American Idol* again," he says. "I watched the old shows; I didn't sing as well then as I do now. Now, being six years on the road, going everywhere, touring everywhere, I'd show them what I've been up to and am capable of doing." — **Cindi Reed**

