

THE PROCRASTINATOR'S GIFT GUIDE *Cheap and easy last minute gifts*



1. Planet Bike Beamer 3 white LED bicycle headlight. Paul's Bicycle Way of Life, four locations, \$19.99.

2. Isis statue. Shambala, 99 West Broadway, \$42.

This winged Isis figure is stunning and adds feminine power that's easy on the pocketbook.

3. Nirvana With the Lights Out box set. CD Game Exchange, 30 E. 11th Ave., \$30 (used).

4. Broker's Gin. Local liquor stores, including Downtown Liquor Store, 220 W. 8th Ave. \$18.95 for a fifth.

Imported and distributed by Hood River Distillers, Inc. and voted 2003's "Best Gin" by Food and Wine Magazine, this gin is the crispest, cleanest, tastiest stuff you'll find.

5. Fridays at the Farm sweet almond moisturizing milk bath (16 oz.) Holiday Market, booth #111, \$16. Also available in 3-oz. size, and various fragrances, including Milk & Honey and Vanilla Grapefruit.

6. Turquoise and sterling silver ring. Un Solo Pueblo, 220 Valley River Center and 1077 Willamette St., \$24.

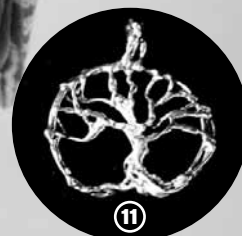
7. Earrings made with pink fiber-optic beads and crystal by Janna Kneale, Moulin Rouge Jewelry Company. Holiday Market, \$26.

8. Hello Kitty mittens, scarf and beanie pack. Berg's Ski Shop, 13th and Lawrence, \$40

9. Grateful Dead teddy bear backpack. Sweet Potato Pie, 20 East 11th Ave., \$25.

10. Hand-carved Balian earrings made from coconut shells. Un Solo Pueblo, 220 Valley River Center and 1077 Willamette St., \$6.

11. Tree of Life pendant by Kirk Houser. Available at Holiday Market or by e-mailing Kirk at kirkh@efn.org, \$27.



GAME ON *2005's coolest video games* BY ANDREW McCOLLUM

Guitar Hero (T) PlayStation 2. \$80

The gist: Players rock out to more than 30 songs with Guitar Hero's custom guitar controller, which comes complete with five fret buttons, a lever to strum and a whammy bar.

Why it's great: An excellent diversion for anyone who plays too much air guitar. If you've seen someone play Dance Dance Revolution then you're familiar with the concept — music plays as colorful dots fall down the screen, the colors correspond with buttons on the controller.

Hit the right button at the right time and score points. The game is accessible to even the most amateur gamer, but veterans will find the game's higher difficulty settings sufficiently challenging. The excellent soundtrack features covers of songs by David Bowie, Boston, The Exies and Jimi Hendrix, to name a few.

Objectionable content: None.

Resident Evil 4 (M) GameCube and PlayStation 2. \$40

The gist: Special Agent Leon Kennedy runs through Spanish villages, castles and dungeons to save the President's daughter while killing zombies.

Why it's great: After a few hours of playing RE4 you

feel like you need to take a shower. The game's impressive graphics are caked in dirt, grime and blood as players fight off hordes of not-quite-zombie cult members. RE4's gunplay is unparalleled and the game's arsenal is filled with satisfying, upgradeable weapons. RE4 is an amazing, engrossing experience that begs to be replayed.

Objectionable content: Plenty. RE4's an intensely violent and scary game. It is not for kids.

Psychonauts (T) Xbox and PlayStation 2. \$50

The gist: Students are abducted at Whispering Rocks, a summer camp for young psychics. Razputin, Raz for short, explores the minds of the various inhabitants of the camp to uncover who's snatching the campers.

Why it's great: Psychonauts, a classic platformer with a psychic twist, looks like an upbeat version of *A Nightmare Before Christmas*. The game's characters are colorful and cartoony. Each of the levels is a surreal representation of a character's personality. For instance, the mind of Coach Oleander, a grizzled army vet, is a war zone filled with foxholes, trenches and shrubbery made of machine gun bullets. Psychonauts' clever dialogue, great sense of humor and compelling gameplay make it a great gift for all gamers, young and old.

Objectionable content: Cartoon violence, some crude humor, and language, but nothing too bad for young teens.

God of War (M) PlayStation 2. \$50

The gist: Kratos, ex-Spartan soldier turned assassin for the gods, flays through ancient Greece on a quest to kill Ares, the god of war.

Why it's great: God of War is one of the most intense, visceral action games made in years. It pits players against a



bestiary filled with classic monsters including harpies, a minotaur, cyclops and gorgons. Combat in God of War is fluid and frantic as players whip, stab and slash gangs of enemies.

Objectionable content: Plenty. God of War is violent, contains nudity and has an off-screen sex scene.

The Nintendo DS \$130

The gist: A handheld system released late last year featuring two screens, one of which is touch sensitive. A great gift for any gamer on the go.

Why it's great: 2005 was a great year for the Nintendo DS. This year the system has seen a multitude of great releases including Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow (T), an innovative take on a classic series; Kirby: Canvas Curse (E), which makes full use of the DS' touch screen; and Mario Kart DS (E), which features online play.

Objectionable content: Not much. Nintendo's systems have always had a good selection of family-friendly games and the DS is no exception.

CLASSIC HOLIDAY CHEER *CDs to get you in the mood* BY BRETT CAMPBELL

SAVAE, *La Noche Buena*

Label: World Library • Genre: Christmas Music of Colonial Latin America

If you want warm music that's appropriate for the holidays yet still has the thrill of the unusual, you can't do better than this mesmerizing disc from the San Antonio Vocal Arts Ensemble. The Spanish conquest of America produced a rich mixture of indigenous Latin American, West European and West African musical forms. Written half a millennium ago by Spanish, Portuguese and Native American composers, these vigorous songs incorporate influences and instruments such as the teponaztli log drum, huehuetl drum, maracas, soprano recorder, wooden rattle, ayacaxtli gourd shaker, bells, cabasa, djembe, tambourine, coyolli jingles, guiro, chichahuatzli rain stick and more.

Arvo Pärt, *Lamentate*

Label: ECM

Pärt, maybe today's most acclaimed postclassical music composer, has been a Eugene favorite since the Oregon Bach Festival debuted his *Litany* a decade ago. His new disk represents a bit of a departure, adding some wrenching dynamic explosions to his trademark bell-like "tintinnabuli" style. The 37-minute title work, a single-movement piano concerto inspired by a massive sculpture in London's Tate Modern museum, was written to accompany a new Peter Sellars antiwar production of a play by Antonin Artaud. Its veers abruptly between what the composer calls "brutal-overwhelming" and "intimate-fragile" moods. Anyone lulled by Pärt's more meditative work may be startled, but this "lament for the living" powerfully captures Pärt's response — repentance and transformation — to the world's violence and pain. A brief anthem to peace, "Da Pacem Domine," movingly sung by the Hilliard Ensemble, provides a soothing musical balm.



Tessa Brinckman & East West Continuo,

Glass Sky

Label: North Pacific Music

Portland-based New Zealand flutist Tessa Brinckman's East West Continuo paints a series of vivid cross cultural musical portraits using flute, koto, harp, viola, cello and violin, and their debut CD is one of the loveliest albums I've heard this year. Portland composer Jack Gabel's "Through a Gentle Rain" evokes a walk in a Portland park. Bernard Andres' "Narthex" was inspired by medieval churches in Burgundy, while Bay Area composer Mark Fish's ambitious, Ravel-ian "Pictures of Miró" (2004) swings from playful to pensive to singing to ominous in

depicting 11 of the Spanish master's paintings. Swiss composer Volkmar Andreae's captivating 1942 flute quartet will happily surprise anyone who thought mid-century classical music must be thorny and dissonant. Brinckman wrote "Glass Sky" after a return visit to her childhood South African home,

incorporating Hindu raga and early European music to evoke the sculpture garden of the artist Helen Martins' Owl House Museum and the area's wildlife. Brinckman commissioned California composer D'Arcy Reynolds to compose a companion suite, "Cloven Dreams," informed by the "magical realism" of the museum's figures and set to an enchanting hybrid of African and European classical musical forms.

Robert Kyr/Third Angle, *Violin Concerto Trilogy*

Label: New Albion

With this release, Eugene's Kyr updates a classical form with contemporary global influences. "On the Nature of Love" is a series of variations for violin and strings on the hymn tune "What a Wondrous Love is This." "On the Nature of Peace" employs

percussion and chamber orchestra to musically enact a conflict and resolution narrative. "On the Nature of Harmony," the most daring in the trio, employs what Kyr calls a world orchestra: string quartet, various orchestral wind and percussion instruments, and the UO's Pacific Rim Gamelan, an ensemble of gongs and other percussion instruments from Bali. Despite the radically different tunings and timbres involved, Kyr demonstrates just how effectively different cultural traditions can not only co-exist, but transcend their origins. The sympathetic performances by Portland's Third Angle new music ensemble make this the finest disk of Northwest postclassical music in years.

Jack Gabel / fEARnoMUSIC,

Spring Quartet

Label: NPM

Portland's venturesome new music ensemble surveys two decades of work by one of the Northwest's finest composers. Anyone who treasures the Japanese impressionism of the late composer Toru Takemitsu will admire the ethereal "Island Phantasy," derived from a folk melody sung during an ancestor worship festival on a Japanese island Gabel visited.

"Elegy" for solo cello is a powerful memorial for the composer's father. In 1993's "Hellenic Triptych" for viola and electroacoustics, the haunting third movement, "Echo's Farewell," which begins in a hesitation dance and then floats away on a modal cloud, is one of the most rapturous musical moments I've heard this year. The major work is 2004's rhythmically charged "Spring Quartet" — the most "classical" sounding piece on the disk. Except for the drifting adagio movement, Gabel's characteristic contemplative passages here give way to a more robust idiom, including a decidedly Coplandish fourth movement. This propulsive style, perhaps influenced by his recent collaborations with choreographer Agneiszka Laska and her dance company, augurs an even brighter future for one of the Northwest's most compelling composers.

HOMEGROWN SOUNDS *Local musicians produce gift-worthy CDs* BY BRETT CAMPBELL

Still looking for that perfect gift with an Oregon twist? Here are a few more CDs from Oregon musicians. If no record label is listed, they're independent releases that you might find in enlightened local record stores or online at cdbaby.

Girl Circus, *Baby Blue/Shangrila* (girlcircus.com)

These days, Darcy DuRuz may be more famous for her slime than her music, but the former slug queen is also an accomplished circus/vaudeville/music performer who's played venues from the Paris Opera to the Salzburg Mozarteum. She and Eugene Symphony/Emerald City Jazz Kings trumpeter/guitarist/composer Dave Bender put together this inventive, utterly delightful Girl Circus project for Country Fair.

Employing more than a dozen musicians (violin, saxes, trumpets, cellos, guitar, percussion and more) plus childrens' choir, the music accompanies fire dancers, rope twirlers, whip crackers, jugglers, clowns, magicians and other acts. After hearing both discs, I'm sorry I missed those live performances, but it does allow me to judge whether the CDs work without having seen the show. They do, and splendidly. The remarkable variety of music (vocal, instrumental, rock, Latin beats, funk, tango, Italian, even some Philip Glass-style choral touches, cabaret) and humor make this circus well worth hearing as well as seeing.

Kurt Doles/DAC Crowell/Daniel Patrick Quinn,

Don't Look Down (Suilven)

This album of ambient acoustic and electronic atmospheres should appeal to fans of Hal Budd, Brian Eno and other musical descendants of Erik Satie. Improvising on clarinet, trumpet, violin, viola, guitars, suling (Balinese bamboo flute) and various electronic magic, Eugene's Doles and his collaborators achieve a rich, shimmering, aqueous sound that's far more than background music. Warning to mellowers who want to drift off to snoozeland: The last track includes some gloriously intense vocal and other sounds.

Mood Area 52/Cosmos Corbin, *Guevara's Ghost* (Rocketboy)

One of the rare remix albums that actually adds something substantive to its source material, this collaboration imparts a new dimension to the Eugene tango masters' earlier acoustic recordings. More than just adding a backbeat drum track, Corbin blends in speeches by Che, various electronic magic tricks, and funk rhythms to produce a hybrid that works more often than not.



Rebecca Oswald, *October Wind* (www.rebeccaoswald.com)

I guess every solo pianist who writes original, non-improvised tunes gets compared to George Winston, and though it's unfair, Oswald's music should certainly appeal to anyone who likes heartfelt, consonant piano miniatures with clear melodies.

OK, I have to confess that some splendid music came out in 2005 that wasn't made in Oregon. Here are a few disks from various global cultures that tickled my ears this year.

Latin American: Anyone who loved the music in Buena Vista Social Club should be thrilled by the expansive, multi-disk *Cuban Essentials* collection (Escondida). Cuba boasts one of the hemisphere's three richest musical traditions, and these disks span not only the *son* style of Ibrahim Ferrer, Compay Segundo and their BVSC cohorts, but also six decades of jazz, salsa and other dance music, and various hybrids — the greatest hits of Cuba's greatest musicians.

Probably the biggest new star to emerge in world music last year was the Brazilian balladeer Seu Jorge, whose star turn in *The Life Aquatic* preceded the unanimous acclaim for his sometimes gritty, sometimes plaintive, always striking album, *Cru*.

Turkish: Maybe the finest example of the mix of contemporary technology and traditional, multi-ethnic sounds I heard this year was Mercan Dede's *Su* (Escondida), which combines his ney (Turkish flute) and percussion with guest stars from around the world to concoct a danceable, atmospheric album of modern global music.

African: Algerian-French chanteuse Souad Massi may be the best-known female singer in the Arabic world. Her beautiful *Mesk Elil* (Honeysuckle) (Wrasse) also incorporates breezy sounds from Mali and Cape Verde, and its closing dance remix shows she can hit a mighty groove as well.

Baka Beyond's long-awaited new mix of African and Celtic European music, *Rhythm Tree* (March Hare), creates hypnotic soundscapes based on traditional music of Cameroon's Baka rainforest people.

Celtic: It's been too long since Cape Breton Island's Mary Jane Lamond visited Eugene, but Celtic music fans can assuage the grief by scoring her new double disk and enhanced CD, *Storas* (Turtlemusik). As before, Lamond finds well-preserved old Gaelic tunes in her Canadian homeland, but this time updates the traditional sounds with contemporary accompaniment and harmonies.