

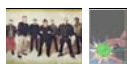
The Register-Guard

ENTERTAINMENT HOME

MUSIC

Funky Lettuce lays down tasty licks together in Eugene

Unlike some groups of musical friends, Lettuce continues to bond as a band



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BY JOANNA BARTLETT

For *The Register-Guard*

FEB. 5, 2016

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When you've been playing music with the same folks for more than two decades, it's important to know how to have fun. Boston-based funk band Lettuce uses its longtime friendships to fuel the music.

"One of the things that makes us special is being really good friends, being dedicated to our craft of music and becoming better individually and together," bass player Erick "Jesus" Coomes says.

VIDEO

☰ Phyllis by Lettuce (Official Music Video)



“When we play music together, we have a really good time. We care about the music and the listeners. Staying friends would have been enough, but the fact we stayed a band and stayed true and loyal to each other is incredible.”

Their music is about sharing a connection between the audience, one another and the music itself, he says. “It’s a real exchange of energy. It’s an exchange of love.”

Lettuce formed in 1992 when its members — then high schoolers — attended a summer music program at the Berklee College of Music in Boston.

“We had similar interests in simple funk,” Coomes says. “We found that it was fun to play music together. We instantly had a cool sound, and we all recognized that.”

When the band members enrolled in Berklee as undergrads, they got together again. They’d go to clubs to listen to bands and want to get up on stage themselves.

“We’d ask them if we could take over their set for a second, and we’d say, ‘Let us play;’” Coomes says, which gave rise to the band’s name, Lettuce.

“At this point it means let us be free, let us be who we are, live our lives and play the music we want to play. And lettuce is really good for you,” Coomes says.

After 20 years of making albums and playing shows, band members feel like family. Which is a good thing as, when they’re on the road, they practically live on top of each other.

For the past couple of years, they’ve been on tour more than they haven’t, crisscrossing the country from California to Florida to New York and Chicago.

Touring life is fun, but it can be hard.

“It’s a lot more work than it may look like,” Coomes says. “I don’t even torture myself thinking about my bed.”

"I believe it still exists in my house somewhere. I'd love to sleep in it sometime."

The band's ongoing tour promotes its fourth album, "Crush," which was developed on the road and released in November.

Fortunately, touring feels a lot like college life, which worked out well for the band.

"I wake up every day smiling," Coomes says. "I'm stoked, regardless of my surroundings, because my friends are there."

That camaraderie comes alive on the stage when Lettuce plays its upbeat, soulful, funky tunes. Their music is mostly instrumental, allowing it to transcend language and cultural barriers, Coomes says.

"It's really different," Coomes says. "It's creative music, but it's really funky. There's a lot of improvisation that goes on, but it stays true to soul music."

It also transcends age barriers.

"A wide variety of people come to the show. Our audience ranges from tiny kids to old people," Coomes says. "It's a really good group of people, enjoying themselves, letting go and dancing."

"You're gonna have a great time, you're gonna dance a lot, you're gonna hear really great music and meet great people."

Joanna Bartlett is a Eugene freelance writer who has been contributing for more than 15 years. She can be reached at joanna.y.bartlett@gmail.com.

CONCERT PREVIEW

Lettuce

With: ProbCause

When: 9 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6

Where: WOW Hall, 291 W. Eighth Ave.

Tickets: \$25, \$20 advance (ticketweb.com)

Learn more and listen: www.lettucefunk.com

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