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scene

## Bass monster lives



Slomo Rabbit Kick plays an all-ages show at 20th Century Bowl on Saturday. *COURTESY PHOTO*

### Slomo Rabbit Kick finds its niche

*Tony Stasiek*

SEATTLE - The first mistake Brian Willett made was saying he and his Slomo Rabbit Kick bandmates got crazier with age.

The second involved a bottle of the Tin Hat Tavern's mustard and a dare.

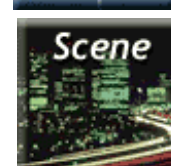
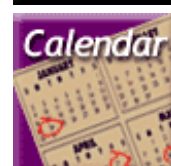
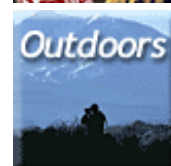
"Brian," singer/multi-instrumentalist Jay Chilcote says to his guitarist, "your tongue is all yellow."

"How are you going to explain this to the missus?" drummer Chris McFarlane says. "That's a new shirt."

Willett eyeballs his collar. Clean. No harm done.

Ill-advised, perhaps, though a welcome way to divert the conversation from its current thread: day jobs, dreams of running databases for English professors and Chilcote's admission that in five years, he'd prefer not to be a software engineer moonlighting as a play-sometimes, scarf-mustard-sometimes indie-rocker.

In 1997, Chilcote and his girlfriend relocated to Seattle from Bellingham. It was a work-related move - in addition to forming the Elsinor Records label here, Chilcote used to run free Whatcom County publication The Echo, when it featured music reviews amid its classified listings.



## Performance

It also made sense from a play perspective. Chilcote's band The Revolutionary Hydra had just recorded its first batch of songs. Its bassist, Ben Gibbard, also began to pick up speed with another new Bellingham band, Death Cab For Cutie.

Fast forward to now, with Death Cab headlining the Gorge Amphitheatre and topping charts at college-radio stations nationwide. At any given moment, Gibbard's songs with duo The Postal Service also could be playing in one of three stores inside Bellis Fair mall.

And Chilcote's enjoying a beer in a Ballard bar. Talking about the Bass Monster.

"The thing about the bass monster is that he has a bass-monster girlfriend who has to move from Bellingham to Seattle because of work," he says. "It's **this whole small town vs. big city dichotomy.**"

It also inspired Chilcote this past fall, when he recorded the first songs for a Revolutionary Hydra side project he dubbed Slomo Rabbit Kick. Its first CD **would be a concept album** - "Bass Monster Lives in the Bass Forest," loosely tied to a misinterpretation of a lyric from then-Anacortes group The Microphones - and a Bellingham **rock opera**.

"But concepts like that are pretty stupid," Chilcote says. "I'd be **brainstorming Bellingham ideas** and only come up with 20 lines worth of thoughts. So I **just started making up lyrics, more freeform.**"

Revolutionary Hydra's Robbie Skrocki joined. Actually, he **threatened to bring his bass-guitar gear to Chilcote's performances and play from the audience if Chilcote didn't allow him onstage.** They brought in Chilcote's friend Willett and indie **pages.com operator** McFarlane, who they knew as the Guy Who Always Stood in **Front at Hydra Shows.**

All but Skrocki work as information-technology administrators by day. All also play in at least two other bands - in addition to Hydra, there's Suretoss, The Condiments and the curiously named Dutch Elms in Full Remission.

Not the kind of guys looking to get on MTV, in other words. Or even hear the songs from their upcoming CD, planned for September release on Skrocki's **new Skrocki Records**, in Urban Outfitters.

Or even be caught dead near Urban Outfitters. After all, they play ramshackle indie rock, a 10-year reunion with all things Pavement, back when Guided by **Voices organized a package club tour called "Insects of Rock."** From Slomo Rabbit Kick's "Tyrolean Hat, Dapper Man:" "If I had the Allens' kind of money/ I'd produce the **best high school movie ever made.**"

It's half remaining blissfully ignorant, half growing up.

"We know we're not going to be 'hot,' we're not going to be popular or hip," Chilcote says. "I think we know our niche, and that it is that with people like us, **our friends who like to**

**Slomo Rabbit Kick, Dame Dulce, So Many Dynamos, A Symmetry** With appearances from Garden Variety Tsar and A Sandcastle Still

8 p.m. Saturday, June 14

20th Century Bowl

1411 N. State St.

734-5250

All ages

[www.slomorabbitkick.com](http://www.slomorabbitkick.com)

hear catchy little songs and music a little more genuine."

There's a pause, a simultaneous polite beer-sip all around.

"When he said niche," Skrocki says, "I'm thinking, like, four people. Tops."

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## Notes

Beatnik boo-boo

- Although its picture appeared on the music-calendar page of a pseudo-new local weekly, moptopped cover band **The Beatniks** did not appear at The Fairhaven Pub & Martini Bar two weeks ago.

Late versions of The Fairhaven's schedule sent to local media replaced May 31 headliner **The Fugitives**, a local rock band, with the Seattle quartet, which has sold out Seattle's Polly Esthers and appeared on VH1's "Cover Wars."

Simple mixup, organizer Wayne Ellis says, though Beatniks booking agent Dean Zelikovsky said the date had been canceled months ago to accommodate The Beatniks' gig at the Muckleshoot Casino.

A similar situation occurred a few weeks back, when Fairhaven organizers kept The Beatniks on the bill after the band had canceled and been replaced by local cover band **The Walrus**.

The Beatniks next scheduled Bellingham show is some time in August, Zelikovsky says.

- Tony Stasiek

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