

COURTESY PHOTO

THE FUN-LOVIN' jokesters of Reel Big Fish plan to make a real big splash at Omaha's Ranch Bowl tonight to show off their new sound.

Reeling in new talent

BY PATRICK MINER
Staff writer

Despite playing Omaha four times in 1997 and not returning since, Reel Big Fish expects the town to roll out the red carpet tonight.

Of course, the Ranch Bowl will gladly oblige.

However, this isn't the same Reel Big Fish that fans will remember from the last Omaha appearance. Joining the eight-piece rock-edged ska band will be a brand new drummer, Carlos De La Garza, who is filling in for the departed Andrew Gonzalez.

According to trumpeter Tavis Werts, Gonzalez was tired of rigorous touring eager for a new experience. His final show with the band was last Monday.

The new drummer De La Garza is a longtime friend of Reel Big Fish and a former member of Action League and Suburban Rhythm.

"He was the drummer Andrew

based his playing on," Werts said. "He's just better."

De La Garza has already learned 18 Reel Big Fish songs in his short time as a member of the band. However, because tonight is only his seventh show, the act is forced to use a set list, something Reel Big Fish hasn't needed in its six-year existence.

The band has also released a new album since its last Omaha appearance. Last year's "Why Do They Rock So Hard?" sports a tougher edge than the band's first release "Turn the Radio Off," but it's less melodic and wasn't as well accepted by critics.

Still, Werts said the band plans to play a majority of tonight's set from "Why Do They Rock So Hard?," including the first single "The Set Up (You Need This)," and current release "Somebody Hates Me."

Also performing tonight is Orange County's Zebrahead, which is giving its second crack at playing in Omaha after canceling a scheduled opening slot with

2 Skinnee J's last summer. While it is as energetic as Reel Big Fish, Zebrahead has a funky rap-rock sound that's quite a bit different from the headlining act.

Scheduling a band that sounds radically different was an intentional decision made by Reel Big Fish, which seems to be focused on expanding music genres.

"We're trying to stay away from touring with ska bands," Werts said. "We just want to give some variety."

The future for Reel Big Fish includes touring through the summer. Although the band is not planning on a Vans Warped Tour appearance, Werts said band members hope to support another act on a full-scale stadium tour this summer.

In September, Reel Big Fish plans to head into the studio to record its third Mojo Records release. Until then, fans can look for the Reel Big Fish versions of the Pixies' "Gigantic" and Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York" on tribute albums.

Music



Zebrahead
"Waste of Mind"
Columbia Records
Grade: C+

Recently, bands like Orange County's Dial-7 and Zebrahead have been springing up to give kids the hard rap-rock they want, but with lyrics that even choosy moms would love.

Like Dial-7, Zebrahead plays hard funky songs with the recipe of Rage Against the Machine meets the Muppets, as the songs are hard-rocking with lyrics that are light-hearted.

Zebrahead's major label debut, "Waste of Mind," brings a hard-edged live sound to the songs. This is the band's second record, and five of the 14 songs here were previously released on the band's indie self-titled album.

Despite the easily digestible Green Day-esque choruses by singer-guitarist Justin Mauriello, the songs on "Waste of Mind" do show some teeth. There are some nice rhymes by the fierce rapping

Ali Tabatabaee, especially on "Walk Away" and its first single, "Get Back."

The best song here is "Big Shot," where the band's rap-rock formula hits a very funky peak. Also, the reggae groove "Jag Off" combines a simple melody from Mauriello and hard rapping by Tabatabaee into a solid mix.

Although Zebrahead experiments with reggae on "Jag Off" and "Move On," most of the songs on "Waste of Mind" follow the similar formula of hard rhyming with pop choruses. While initially satisfying, it really wears thin.

-Patrick Miner

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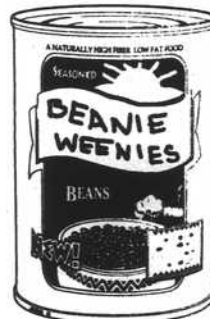
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