

# The Register-Guard

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## MUSIC

# Meet the World's Finest chameleons

The Portland band will play Saturday at Hi-Fi with Hillstomp

BY JOANNA BARTLETT

*For The Register-Guard*

DEC 9, 2016

**T**he musical road can be a winding one. A few years down the road, you may not be playing the kind of music you first envisioned and you don't know who you'll meet along the way.

World's Finest, a Portland-based Americana jamgrass band, began as a guitar and bass duo playing light-heart folk-reggae in 2011. They quickly joined forces with a drummer, then added a banjo player and a saxophonist, changing their sound as they went.

Adding banjo "led us down more of a bluegrassy, folky direction," bassist Evan Malfer said. When they switched drummers to one who has "pretty big chops, we opened it up a bit more, getting into rock 'n' roll, funk, dub and reggae," he said. "We still had the bluegrass element and that banjo twang on top of everything."

Their sax player also turned into a guitar player and singer, allowing World's Finest to incorporate three-part harmonies into their Americana numbers.

The band met through the Portland music scene, although members hail from across the country: Ohio, Illinois, New York, Eastern Oregon and California.

Their current lineup includes Chris Couch on acoustic guitar and vocals; Dan Hurley on electric banjo and vocals; Sean McLean on sax, electric guitar and vocals; Malfer on electric and upright bass; and Mike Apodaca on drums.

The music they play now might best be described as skaggrass, a blend of ska, Americana, dub and bluegrass — with some funk and electronica for good measure.

The eclectic nature of their music might suggest they don't really fit in anywhere. However, the band finds the opposite to be true.

"We touch all over the place, genre-wise," Malfer said. "It's gotten us some cool opportunities. We'll get booked at a bluegrass festival two weeks after we're booked at an electronica festival, and then we'll get an opening slot for a reggae act."

They've become musical chameleons. "We change our colors to fit into that scene and give the audience what they're hoping to hear."

At an electronica festival, you won't hear the bluegrass songs; you'll hear psytrance and dub, Malfer said. "We'll get on board at a reggae show and dig into the ska, reggae and dub library."

Their musical library now is four albums deep, with the release of "We Got Ourselves a Game Here," a six-song EP, in October. It's a "quick hit-it-and-quit-it album" whose tracks didn't fit with the vision of their previous full-length album or their next one planned for the spring.

"They're all kind of high energy, whether it's slam-grass, punk or ska," Malfer said.

As for its Saturday show with Hillstomp at Hi-Fi Music Hall, World's Finest will tap into its chameleon nature. "You're going to get more of the American bluegrassy jam side of things," Malfer said. "Of course, with all the other elements throughout the show."

*Joanna Bartlett is a Eugene freelance writer and can be reached at [joanna.y.bartlett@gmail.com](mailto:joanna.y.bartlett@gmail.com).*

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## CONCERT PREVIEW

*World's Finest and Hillstomp*

When: 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 10

Where: Hi-Fi Music Hall, 44 E. Seventh Ave.

Tickets: \$12 in advance ( [hifimusichall.com](http://hifimusichall.com) ) and \$15 day of show; 21 and older.

Learn more and listen: [worldsfinestmusic.com](http://worldsfinestmusic.com) and [www.hillstomp.com](http://www.hillstomp.com)

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### MUSIC

## A year of change: Wild Child has gone through quite a bit in 2016

The band is planning a stop at WOW Hall on Friday, Dec. 9

If 2016 had a theme for the Austin, Texas-based band Wild Child, it could be summed up in one word: change. "This past year, it's been crazy for us, we've gone through so much change,"

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