

MUSIC

Metric's less-than-measured response to musical success

The indie rock band plays McDonald Theatre on Saturday





Rock band *The Metric* plays at McDonald Theatre on Saturday, Feb. 20. (Alysse Gafkjen)

BY JOANNA BARTLETT

For The Register-Guard

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In music, sometimes you just have to let the beat keep driving you on. Metric's synthy, introspective electronic pop-rock emerges from an eclectic background, an independent outlook and a willingness to keep moving forward.

Between the four band members, they've lived in India, Great Britain, several Canadian provinces and a handful of cities in the United States. As a band, they've been based in Toronto, Montreal, New York, Los Angeles and London.

VIDEO

Metric - The Governess (Official Version)



Metric began as a duo. Originally named Mainstream, it was formed in Toronto in 1998 by Emily Haines (lead vocals, synthesizers, guitar) and James Shaw (guitar, synthesizers, backing vocals).

Three years later, they were joined by Joshua Winstead (bass, synthesizers, backing vocals) and Joules Scott-Key (drums and percussion).

They've since released six albums, touring the United States, Canada and Europe in support of each of them. Along the way they've picked up a smattering of accolades, including multiple Juno Awards and a Satellite Award nomination for "The Twilight Saga: Eclipse" theme song "Eclipse (All Yours)," written by composer Howard Shore and Haines, in 2011.

It's also the first band without a traditional record contract to land a Top 20 commercial U.S. radio hit.

An essential ingredient to the band's success, Shaw says, is that, "We just kept going without thinking of what would happen if we stopped. There's an element of shut up and keep going.

"Every time we thought we'd stop, take a break for a year, it didn't happen. We'd get two weeks into it and write a song"

Shaw describes the band's career as "a blur of music and people and places and life and nights. And weed. Let's be honest, there was a lot of weed," Shaw says.

"It's one of those things that you're like, one day, you have a beer in one hand and you decide to get in a van and go play a show in some city. And all of a sudden, it's 15 years later and you've made six albums and you've dedicated your whole life to it."

The group's sixth album, "Pagans in Vegas," was released last fall.

Metric may be an electronic music-making engine, but its driving need for autonomy keeps it independent of the Big Music machine. The past three albums were released on the band's own label: Metric Music International.

"We own all the rights to our music," Shaw says. "We did everything in our power to get the middleman out of the equation.

"It's a good feeling, because being beholden to that machine is difficult at times. The machine asks you to bend and contort in ways that aren't comfortable.

"We don't have to answer to anybody except the fans," Shaw continues. "No one can really tell us what to do.

"If we want to tour, we tour. If we want to make records, we make 'em. Our fans are dedicated and awesome."

While the current 24-city "I Can See the End" tour is in support of "Pagans in Vegas," Shaw says audiences can expect songs from every Metric album.

"We're playing songs from the new record, but we're playing songs from every record. We want to go out and experience the band we've been for the entire time we've been a band."

Metric will bring its independently brewed indie rock — infused with elements of New Wave, post-punk revival, synthpop and dance-rock — to the McDonald Theatre on Saturday.

Joywave, an American indie rock band from Rochester, N.Y., will open the show.

"Expect the whole Metric shebang," Shaw says. "This is about what happens when we get into the same room as (our audience). Sometimes that energy goes back and forth and back and forth and turns into rock 'n' roll church.

"That's why we show up every day."

Joanna Bartlett is a freelance writer who lives in Eugene. She can be reached at joanna.y.bartlett@gmail.com.

CONCERT PREVIEW

Metric

Opener: Joywave

When: 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 20

Where: McDonald Theatre, 1010 Willamette St.

Tickets: All-ages general admission \$31, \$26 advance (TicketsWest)

Learn more and listen: www.ilovemetric.com and www.joywavemusic.com

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Local

HEALTH

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