



Heavy Rotation

In the sonic-soaked Orange County music scene, five on-the-verge bands are catching deals and downloads while carving out niche noises | By Arrissia Owen Turner |

The Union Line

Two years after their first jam on a rainy Friday, The Union Line took the title of Best Live Band at the OC Music Awards and landed on alt rock radio station KROQ. Add to that an international tour, topped off by an RCA subsidiary recording deal, and they've had a pretty swell career to date. After signing with Black Seal the Wilco-reminiscent band (that prides itself on a whiskey-soaked granola vibe) re-released their percussion-heavy, self-titled recording. They're in the studio now working on new material, and playing Detroit Bar Jan. 5.

Young the Giant

You may know them as The Jakes, but after a legal scuffle, they've resurfaced as the fist-pumping indie rockers with the jolly moniker. The Newport Beach band's 2009 EP *Shake My Hand's* pop hooks and vocal verve won them an opening spot for Kings of Leon last summer and their summer-inspired album, produced by Grammy winner Joe Chiccarelli (White Stripes, The Shins), debuts soon. "I'm most excited for the unknown," says lead singer Sameer Gadhia, who with his bandmates put college on the backburner. "There are things I have no idea are even going to happen. Depending on how the music is pushed, we could tour the U.K., Japan, who knows?"

The New Limb

It's no surprise The New Limb received a Best Live Band nod at the OC Music Awards. Joey Chavez's thoughtful lyrics and soothing croon are only occasionally upstaged by keyboardist Lauren Salamone's ivory tickles. The

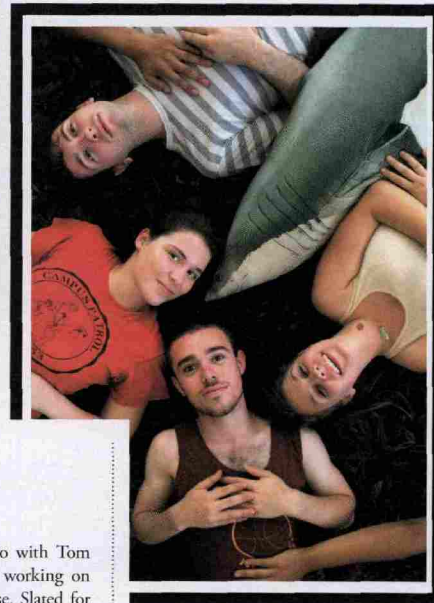
Costa Mesa hush rockers are in the studio with Tom Mgrdichian (Stevie Wonder, Air Supply), working on *Allude to the Sounds*, the band's new release. Slated for early 2010, we expect big things to best the banana leaf-wrapped CD they sold at their June Detroit residency with a cover mix of Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time."

The Steelwells

Think dreamy, *Pet Sounds*-era melodies filled with varying textures and lush harmonies. Singing about shipwrecked crews and broken relationships, the young Fullerton band's recent EP *Shallow on the Draft* is a pre-party lullaby. Frontman Joey Winter and his cohorts played live relentlessly last year, perfecting their stage presence. And the ship talk? "Nothing in life is a for-sure deal, and if we can't keep our heads on straight, we will in the end be failures," says Winter. "We have all these big-picture ships and smaller, day-to-day ships, but in the end it's our crew that will help get us where we need to go."

Avi Buffalo

Frontman Avigdor Zahner-Isenberg may sing about bacon in "What's in It For?" the band's Sub Pop seven-inch release, but you won't get the song out of your head. Zahner-Isenberg, who actually goes by Avi Buffalo, may be from LBC, but guitarist Arin Fazio is an H.B. res, so we'll claim them. After opening sold-out shows for Vampire Weekend recently, many are smitten. Tastemaker radio stations KCRW and BBC1 are on the bandwagon, as is the snarky touchstone music website Pitchfork, which bestowed Avi with a seven out of 10 for their debut. **R**



Clockwise from top left: Costa Mesa's The New Limb consists of Joey Chavez, Lauren Salamone, Adam Chavez and Danilo Perez; radio regulars Avi Buffalo; the boys of San Juan Capistrano-based band The Union Line like plaid, moustaches and whiskey.



THE NEW LIMB PHOTO COURTESY OF BAND; AVI BUFFALO PHOTO BY EDE MCCONNELL; THE UNION LINE PHOTO BY DAVEY WILSON

