

5 ARTISTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

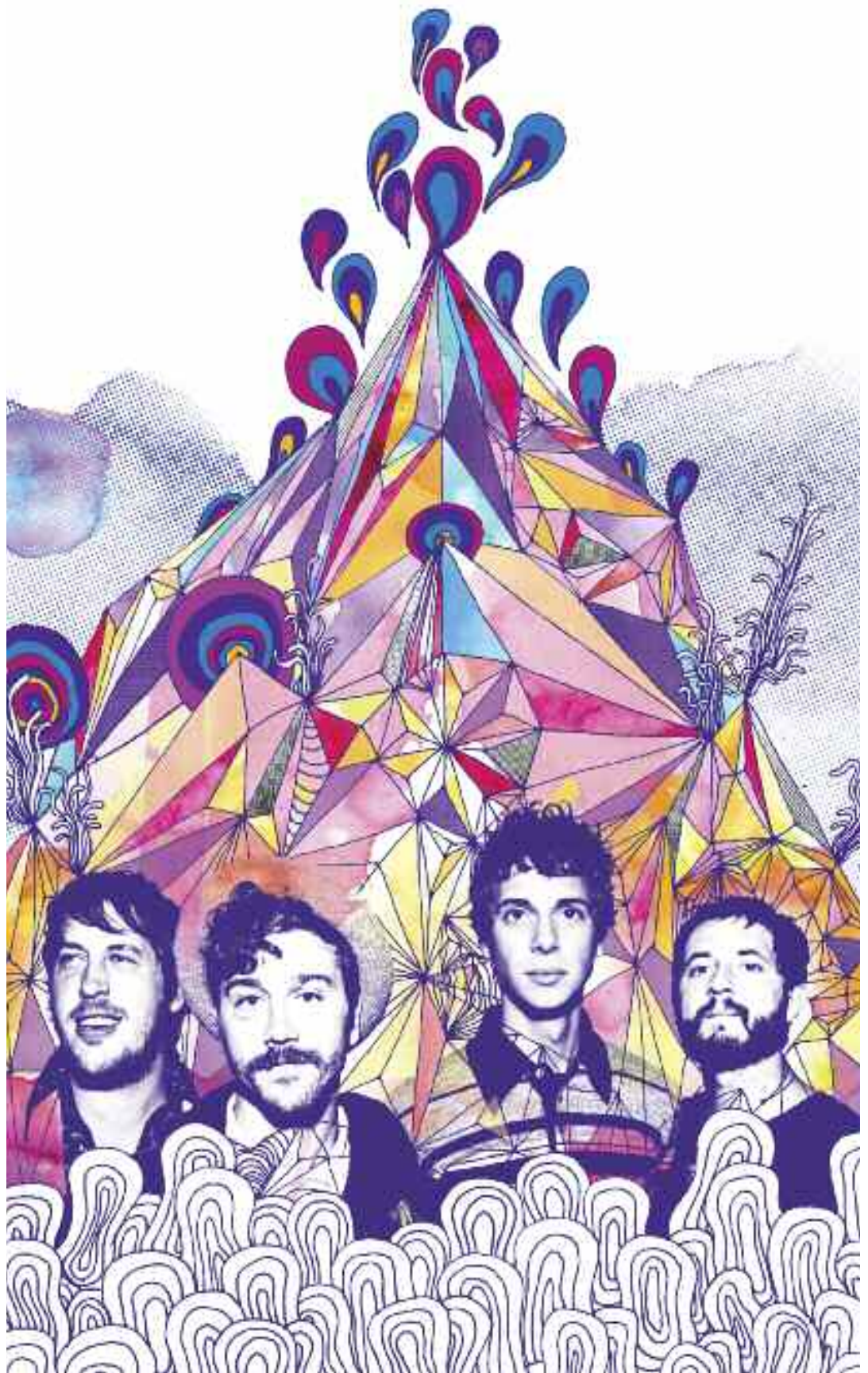
Portugal. The Man

PORTLAND, ORE.

Rural Psychedelia

• The members of **Portugal. The Man** have come a long way since forming in Wasilla, Alaska in 2004. "Up until a few years ago, we were getting by on \$2 and \$3 a meal," says singer/guitarist **John Gourley**. "We had a rice cooker and a five pound bag of rice." But those days of hardship have likely passed since the band moved to Portland, Ore., landed a deal with Atlantic Records and garnered spots at festivals such as Bonnaroo and Lollapalooza. Gourley, who pens most of the band's songs, draws inspiration for the group's progressive psych-pop sound from growing up in a cabin in rural Alaska. "Being out there so isolated and [feeling] so small—and looking up and seeing the stars and the moon—I think it created these really weird thoughts and scenarios," he says. "I absolutely love visuals and picturing the sounds that would go with each visual." On their sixth album and Atlantic debut, *In The Mountain In The Cloud*, Portugal continues to evolve into one of the most promising acts on the indie rock scene, successfully translating the raw energy of their live performances into the studio setting. **Sam Davis** ●

www.portugalthemaman.com





02

Laura Jansen LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

Modern Day Gypsy

• "My parents were world citizens—gypsies," says singer/songwriter **Laura Jansen** who spent her childhood between the United States and Holland. "We'd move all the time for fun and work, so it was very normal for me to change schools and try to learn all kinds of new things." One of the few constants in her life was the piano that her mother got for her at the age of five. Their house was also filled with music, ranging from songs by Joni Mitchell and Barbra Streisand to "weird Brazilian protest songs my mom loved." After studying at Berklee College of Music in Boston, she moved to Nashville, Tenn. but soon feared that she didn't have a musical voice. It took a bad breakup with a boyfriend for her to find that voice—while alone in their once cozy house, she pounded out her feelings on piano to create the songs on her debut, *Bells*. Jansen sees the fact that her music springs from dark personal times as a positive thing. "The songs and meanings change as the years go on," she says. "They are also stark reminders of where I came from." www.laurajansen.com

Nancy Dunham

03

Shamarr Allen and The Underdaws NEW ORLEANS, LA.

Hip-Rockers

• "Fans know they can expect to have the time of their lives with us," former Rebirth Brass Band frontman **Shamarr Allen**, says. "We love first-timers because we know we'll hook 'em for life." Crescent City funk, jazz and brass sounds are prevalent throughout the Underdaws' music, and although they like to classify their sound as "hip-rock," they don't want to be pigeonholed into any genre. The group formed in 2008 and most members had been playing music together for years, calling themselves "underdaws" because of the way they "were feeling as a unit" when no one would let them play their clubs, Allen says. "Instead of hiding from it, we owned it." Today, the band has just returned from a successful tour of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan where they were selected to represent the United States as Cultural Ambassadors, and are putting out their second record, *504-799-8147*. The album title is Allen's actual phone number, which he gives out to the crowd at every show. "I love my fans and like to hear their thoughts about our music," he says. "If someone's crazy enough to call or text, I'm crazy enough to answer!"



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www.shamarrallen.com

Amy Jacques



04

The Growlers COSTA MESA, CALIF.

Riding the Wave of Bent Sound

• Formed in 2006, **The Growlers'** brand of surf rock is a wavy beach kaleidoscope of country, skiffle, blues and psychedelic. "If it's beach goth or whatever you want to call it—you can't really do it in Nebraska," says singer **Brooks Nielsen** referring to California's influence on the quintet. The band's latest EP, *Hot Tropics*, is an ambling, drunken shot of The Growlers signature "bent sound," a term coined by surfer buddy Alex Knost. Catalyzed in the live setting by the croon and vamp of Nielsen, the band plays short, but flowing sets of their wavy surf tunes. While they have recently found themselves associated with psych-rock bands—they travel the country in their own reclaimed school bus—the term is not something they're quite comfortable with. "We're using reverb and delay, getting experimental with recording, so a lot of it comes out psychedelic sounding," Nielsen says. "But when you team us up with a bunch of psychedelic bands, I feel so funny. We're not over-the-top trippy," Nielsen says. The Growlers are sticking to simpler, more country-tinged music for their eccentric sound. "When we started out, I was into making weird music—and I still am—so I'm going to keep doing that."

www.thegrowlers.com Pietro C. Truba

05

Telesma BALITMORE, MD.

Psychedelic Circus

"We've been described as a psychedelic circus," says guitarist/drummer **Chris Mandra**. "But it would be a psychedelic circus where the performers are everyone." Using instruments as ancient as the didgeridoo and as inventive as the manDrum—a real-time electronic-based percussion interface that Mandra developed—the sextet **Telesma** has been together since 2002. Their sound encompasses tribal, rock, trance and Middle Eastern music, and has influences that extend beyond musical avenues and delves into the world of visual art and dance. Telesma aims for a communal artistic experi-



ence, enlisting belly dancers and performers to collaborate at their live happenings. Noted psychedelic painter Alex Grey has shared the stage with the group, as documented on the

group's recent DVD *Hearing Visions: Live*. "We try to make it an environment where people want to celebrate being alive."

www.telesmaband.com Dana Sobel