

Graham & the Crackers

Tropical fusion band elicits dreams of summer

By Alex Fontana

You know those Corona Beer commercials where you see the couple's feet and a pair of Coronas on a table between them; the lovers' view of a calm ocean in the background suggests a pristine and tranquil island somewhere in the Caribbean.

Now, keeping that image in mind, imagine a tropical fusion band's music fading in. Gradually, looking around on this bright sunny day, you see children laughing and playing with their families, everyone is getting along fine and then you smell it - the pizza.

The combination of fresh baked bread with zesty tomato sauce and toppings fills your nose with a warm and inviting aroma of culinary comfort, at Mississippi Pizza Pub, 3552 N. Mississippi.

In the next room, you discover the music that has been setting this mood is from the jazzy band known as Graham & The Crackers. The warm festive day invites you to select any one of the many beers and wines that the Mississippi has to offer. You slip into the Atlantis room that reminds you of a block party at your friend's house near the beach. Such is the feeling you get as you listen to the

main song, *There's No Place Like Home*, which is on the CD of the same name.

You watch as Graham Bezodis fires up the keyboards and tells the tale of *Finding Captain Nemo*. Paul Chandler's lead guitar work compliments the story with melodic accents of the adventure.

Meanwhile, drummer Bryan Wynn and bassist Matt Edmonds supply the drive that makes you wonder what it would be like if you had a twin mast schooner right outside to go sailing.

In the next song, *This Love*, Edmonds struts with his smooth vocal spotlight and five-string bass guitar to deliver the message of joy and overcoming romantic triumph. Graham and the band banter about between each song with self-inflicting jokes. Playful, poetic and with growing harmonies, the recently reformed Graham and the Crackers have played for about a year now.

Graham may be a man of few words in public, preferring to let his music speak for itself as he hands this writer his CD; but in either case, his words in person or in his music can be understated. In the seamless casual song, *Just Another Tuesday...in May*, Graham gives little indication of the hard

work that the band puts into the song by making it look so easy. The band will develop yet another CD for possibly this summer's enjoyment.

The song *Spanish Web* displays some fine riffs of Gene Ehrbar's Telecaster, blending in the transitions of more instrumental fusion. On the next number, *Road Trip*, you are instantly transported to visions as a member of the band, traveling in a woody station-wagon with some easy-going reggae surf music. Graham's piano work in *Desire* does just that, to inspire you to strive forward.

To get a taste of Graham, you can meet him in person on Friday, May 26 from 7 to 9 p.m., when he will be playing a solo performance at the Urban Rhythms coffee shop in Beaverton. Directly in front of the MAX light rail at the Beaverton Central station, this venue can present a perfect time to hear Graham and pick up a CD from the artist himself.

To catch more of the band in their entirety with show dates, music and CDs, go to www.grahamandthecrackers.com. The next time you close your eyes and hear the music, you too can imagine that mini-vacation in the Caribbean any time you want.