

BEACON

Tuesday, July 3, 2007

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Winston's to host experimental performers

by Rachel Cromidas
June 21, 2007

What does a mix of heavy metal, mezzo-soprano opera, jazz and spoken-word poetry sound like? Like Pruitt Igoe, a San Diego-based band that has been combining all these elements in their performances for nearly three years, often with unexpected results.

"It has such a totally different sound that I can't even compare it to any band. You just have to hear it for yourself to gain an understanding of what that means," said Lesli Bandy, longtime friend of band founder Ted Washington and a collaborator with him in Puna Press, which publishes local authors. Pruitt Igoe has brought their experimental sounds to New York City and Los Angeles as well as the San Diego music scene and will be performing on Wednesday, June 27, at Winston's Beach Club in Ocean Beach, where the band first played in June 2004.

Washington, both a visual artist and the author of several books of poetry founded Pruitt Igoe to strengthen collaboration between him and various musicians.

Bored with simply reading aloud in cafes and bars while promoting his first poetry book, Washington said he began giving spoken-word performances alongside various musicians. Today, Pruitt Igoe includes Molly Wilmot, a mezzo-soprano singer for the San Diego Opera, percussionist Chad Farran, modern dancer Coco Cambell, guitarist Jon Cordova and keyboard player Matt Kerr.

Pruitt Igoe derives its name from a failed housing project in St. Louis. As a child walking past the building, Washington said, "I remember Pruitt Igoe was beautiful, a city of lights when they first built it. But when they were tearing it down in my early teens, it was like the scariest place on earth. I wanted my band to be ... beautiful and scary at the same time."

Poverty and the lack of safe and affordable housing are just two social issues that influence Pruitt Igoe on stage, along with themes of war, sex and love, and often yield to improvisation.

Washington said, "The beautiful thing is we never know exactly what we're going to do. We can have a set list, and then throw it out when we get on stage."

Washington regularly reads poetry at Winston's and works as a doorman there.

He publishes his poems through Puna Press, which he founded to promote music, creative writing, poetry and performance from San Diego, according to Bandy.

Washington and Pruitt Igoe will be performing on June 27 at 9:30 p.m. at Winston's Beach Club, 1921 Bacon St. in Ocean Beach.

For more information, call (619) 222-3802.

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