

Things may not get much cooler than this

Sonic Youth

with Jesus Lizard

Friday, November 16, 6 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Cat's Cradle
tickets: \$12

Sonic Youth is not a "political" band in that politics don't overflow like an Exxon oil spill in their music.

But when it comes to bashing the PMRC (Parents Music Resources Council), advocating a more humane and equal social system or promoting freedom of expression, these urban, artsy, sonic-sounding punksters are more than ready to jump on their collective soapbox.

Along those lines, guitarist Lee Renaldo made some comments to *Omnibus* last Wednesday regarding the previous day's state election as well as the band's present tour.

Of course Jesse Helms was one of those politicians that rock musicians across the board wanted gone, but Renaldo wasn't shocked by the result.

"It wasn't really surprising given the climate of the times," he said in a telephone interview from Denver.

In fact, Renaldo said that keeping the political scene as it now exists might be used as a greater incentive in pressing for change. "Having completely ridiculous people in power gives you something to fight for," he said.

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Ever since they made their grueling, grinding way up from dissonant, New York City, psychotic garage noise to major-label garage sound with sonic polish, the members of Sonic Youth have been outspoken about the misuse and political ills of a government controlled by an elite minority. They are concerned about preserving the basic rights and needs of individuals, with freedom of expression and artistry being way up there on the list.

Just look at the cover of their latest LP, *Goo*, an album that was quickly propelled to the top of the college charts, giving Geffen Records yet another alternative smash.

The cover is a black and white drawing by Raymond Pettibon, an artist and a friend of the band members. In one picture, it personifies the word "cool" and suggests a wrapping of cultish mystique for the whole concept, particularly with the passage written across the back of the picture: "I stole my sister's boyfriend. It was all whirlwind, heat, and flash. Within a week we killed my parents and hit the road."

It looks like a rare bootleg from the Velvet Underground, and its rather obscure concept didn't hit it off well at Geffen.

"When we signed with Geffen, we had total artistic control," Renaldo said. And although Geffen holds many

of the purse strings, the album cover stayed and evidently hasn't hurt the band's popularity or record sales.

For the most part, Sonic Youth's relationship with Geffen has been a good one. *Goo* is the band's first major-label effort, and Geffen has helped expand the record's distribution and its accessibility to a broader market audience.

Sonic Youth is one of those rare bands whose name almost perfectly fits their image and sound. It is the voice and appeal of a younger generation. Its raw uninhibited rock is more mature, torn from the group's historic climb to the top from the distant underground.

And the sound, from all angles, is sonic. Sonic guitars, sonic vocals, sonic punk. But don't think thrash. When a band uses ingenuity and creativity to distinguish sound from noise, texture from trash and vocals from screeching nonsense, the result can be rather nice — in a sonic way.

Breaking down traditional three-chord melodies, grinding them up in the dumpster and rebuilding them carefully and diligently with the leftover pieces, bent, scraped and broken, Sonic Youth produces a finished product of cosmic punk-power-pop that features rock-solid melodic dissonance that's still boucy enough to bang your head to.

Kim Gordon is a punkster with an aggressive sensual appeal that stands starkly against more innocent female spotlights like Edie Brickell and Natalie Merchant. Thurston Moore was listed in *Spin* magazine's top 35



Sonic Youth's 'Goo'

guitarists of all time, and along with Renaldo, sports the power rock that helps Sonic Youth stick together like *Goo*.

Renaldo admitted that the group didn't do much different stylistically on the latest record, although he did say the production sounds a bit different. He also said that the larger crowds on this tour may be due to the fact

that they've been around a good while now.

Goo's "hit" single "Kool Thing" affords the opportunity to see a true piece of the album, with all of the coolness and underground fanaticism that's won over a following which sees Sonic Youth as a band that is, without even knowing it, simply too cool for the others.

Renaissance music from all corners of the globe

Brave Combo

Tuesday, November 20, 10 p.m.

Cat's Cradle
For ticket information call 967-9053

Brave Combo creates global music; eastern and African rhythms and Polish polkas are only part of its unique world sound.

Brave Combo hails from Denton, Texas. It has been described as a "nuclear polka band," as its polka sound was born during the rise of new wave. After it added even more ethnic dimensions to its already chic multi-cultural rhythms, including a strong dose of Tex-Mex culture, the band modernized these sounds into one hip international groove. Since 1980, the band has released nine albums in the United States, signing with Ronder Records after its fifth album, *No Sad Faces*.

Carl Finch, leader of Brave Combo, seems pleased with the success of the group's latest release, *A Night On Earth*. "It looks like it's doing well," he said, "and our recognition factor is

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Concert

growing daily."

Of course, a multicultural band like Brave Combo probably will not be a band bound for major pop stardom. But that doesn't seem to bother Finch. His musical concentration on polka and other international sounds was ignited by an intense dissatisfaction with mainstream pop music in the late '70s.

In a desperate search for something different, Finch found international ethnic sounds in the bargain racks of record stores. "Some of these records only cost about 35 cents each," he said. "Most of them were small polka and Latin labels, as well as smaller Mexican labels."

Since then, Brave Combo has emerged as a refreshing, intelligent and entertaining band that has landed loads of critical plaudits. Its diverse sound has enabled the group to participate in unique musical projects, including writing music for David Byrne's *True Stories* and Disney's *Gumby* album.

Though he says the genre is slow

improving, Finch's distate for pop remains strong. "Now that Brave Combo has been involved in the business side of it," he said, "we have seen that the pop music business is dumber than ever. It's generally more political, in that it is dealing more with numbers and money. It's a tightly controlled industry."

Finch did say that Brave Combo's relationship with Rounder has been a positive one. "Our record company allows us to do pretty much what we want to do," he said.

Finch and the rest of Brave Combo (Mitch Marine, Bubba Hernandez and Jefferey Barnes) have all studied music extensively, either in college or on their own, and all had played with and organized previous bands.

Finch's dedication to international music has continued throughout the group's current tour. He is amazed at the number of people who haven't heard the good musicians from the Polish polka community who are right in their vicinity, he said.

Sometimes Finch has to deal with the inevitable problem of polka — people not taking it very seriously. Finch himself takes it seriously because it is a universal form of music played by a host of different cultures around the world.

The band declined an invitation to perform on the Tracy Ullman show because, said Finch, "we didn't like the way polka was going to be presented. We weren't going to sacrifice our principles for national exposure."

Finch said he is "guardedly optimistic" about the recent exposure of the world music scene. "It's good that more people are opening their minds about it," he said. But he is not thrilled about the big musicians integrating it into their own music. He believes the truest form of international music can be found through listening to the original international artists themselves. "If we can change someone's mind about polka, then we have succeeded," he said.

Even today, Finch retains his original seriousness and professionalism concerning Brave Combo's music. "We want to be as true to our music as we can," he said, "to be able to lose ourselves in it. The whole point of music is to carry someone to another plane. If we can't do that, we need to find something else to do."

Little Jack Melody, also from Denton, will be opening for Brave Combo at the Cat's Cradle, Nov. 20. LJM's debut album, still in its finishing stages, is being produced by Finch. Melody's "neo-cabaret" style has al-

ready received good reviews in Texas, and notes swingers like Frank Sinatra as influences.

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