


The members of our favorite local rock band, Blitzen Trapper, contemplate an important tool of their trade.



Meet Your Makers



The boys in the band:
Marty Marquis (from left)
Drew Laughery, Michael
VanPelt, Eric Earley, Hank
Mentear, and Brian Adrian

The Eclecticists Blitzen Trapper *Band*

ERIC EARLEY, Blitzen Trapper's chief songwriter and singer, is somewhere in Washington state, tucked cozily inside a van that's zooming up I-5. The trees lining the side of the road are green. The traffic is light for a change. It's a good day. But his cell phone has started breaking our conversation into bits. Given the situation, it's best to be brief.

"I think the new record was influenced by—" he says, trailing off. "I don't know—whoever." These might sound like the detached musings of an aspiring rock star, if not for the fact that such haziness perfectly describes what the band does best—that is, everything. Over the course of a typical album, sometimes even over the course of one song, Blitzen Trapper revels veers between folk-country, power pop, hippie hootenanny, and fuzzy guitar freak-out. But the band's fourth album, *Furr* (out September 23 on Sub Pop), features something that is, at least for these musicians, truly revolutionary: focus. A newfound attention to sugary hooks makes *Furr* one of the best rock albums of 2008 (just try to keep from falling in love with the sing-along lilt of the title track).

Luckily, despite the band's sudden notoriety in indie rock's upper echelon, Blitzen Trapper hasn't ditched Portland. Like *Wild Mountain Nation*, the group's last album, *Furr* was hashed out in a studio in a battered telegraph building near the Willamette River that used to house Sally Mack's School of Dance. This time, though, the band added a piano that Earley found abandoned in the hall of the building. It's missing a few keys, but no matter: The instrument lends a mournful sigh to new tracks like "Not Your Lover" and "Echo." Like many Blitzen songs, "Echo" proceeds to bleed from lo-fi piano ballad to ambient dirge to funky breakdown in the course of three minutes. Some habits, apparently, die hard. "We're not ADD," Earley insists. "I just don't like to do the same thing twice." —JC