

Student Spotlight: 'Few clothes Johnson' (a.k.a. Johnse Ostman)

By Kaci Hamilton
Whalesong contributor

Do you think you could be on your way to graduating with a B.S. in Environmental Science and a Math minor, play two instruments in two bands, snowboard when there is snow, do the fieldwork, research and write the follow-up 30-page paper for your classes, work as a commercial fisherman in the summer, and still have the energy to be patient and nice to me when I show up talking about interviewing you for the Whalesong?

Well, somebody has to do it and his name is Johnse Ostman. Johnse is one of those guys that you don't see coming; aside from being a super talented musician (he plays in the Panhandle Crabgrass Revival Band and Reubens) and a second Bill Nye the Science Guy, he's a very easy-going, yet extraordinary person. Take his name for example. His parents went to see a play about the Hatfield/McCoy feud and when they heard the alias used for the characters 'Few Clothes Johnson,' they invented a spelling and named their first of two sons. He's never met another 'Johnse', and he probably never will, for he's truly one of a kind.

After leaving his home town in the New Jersey Pennsylvania area 12 years ago, he landed in a little fishing village with a population of 20 (and you thought Juneau was small) called Elfin Cove in exchange for food. There, he worked trolling, crab-

bing and longlining for about 8 years, and enjoying the comfort of living in a place named Hobbitt Hole. He still does some crabbing in the summer, mostly

class, a Hydrology Technician for the Forestry Sciences Lab, a GIS Intern for the ADEC-Cruise Ship Wastewater Discharge Program and a Math Tutor and

T.A. The future has a lot of promise for this guy. He still isn't quite sure what he wants to do with his degree, though. "Maybe a Groundwater Hydrologist," he says. According to Johnse, it's a rapidly changing and evolving field that requires a lot of research. Maybe he'll go into it. Maybe he won't.

Getting back to those gargantuan research papers, they aren't all work and no play. An average field trip involves taking the tram up to Mt. Roberts (even though it's closed) and digging a huge snow pit and collecting data. Of course when you're on a mountain on a beautiful day in Juneau, you aren't going to be slaving the whole time. His classmates make sure to through in some ramp building and snow-shovel sliding in the process. Don't ask! You had to have been there. One of his most memorable research projects dealt with observing the seasonal advancement of a retreating glacier, a project that had never been done before. So not only is he a nice guy,

but he's also innovative!

When he's not too busy being brilliant and serious, Johnse is just as crazy as the rest of us Alaskan drifters. We are all looking for that great adventure and the amazing story to tell our kids and at 30 years old, Johnse already has it. He's survived being tossed around solo like a plastic toy by 25ft waves on the open seas and going through the spin cycle of nature's washing machine. Amid all this danger, he managed to squeeze in some time for golf; on the frozen Bering Sea, that is.

Just like anyone else, Johnse has his dreams. One day, you may just be reading about him in the Empire as that year's winner of the Iditarod. But in the meantime, he's just going to continue to do his thing: a little banjo and guitar playing with his bands, some snowboarding when there *is* snow, a little trolling in the summer, some more research papers, and being a nice guy.



Photo courtesy of Johnse Ostman

Music maker Johnse (right) hard at play with his band fiddler Captain Ferg. Johnse and the Panhandle Crabgrass Revival Band were on tour in Slime Creek, just north of Denali.

revisiting some of his favorite spots between Juneau and Sitka. In addition to holding the scientifically-proven most dangerous job in the world, Johnse has worked as a shipwright, a T.A. for the Geology 104

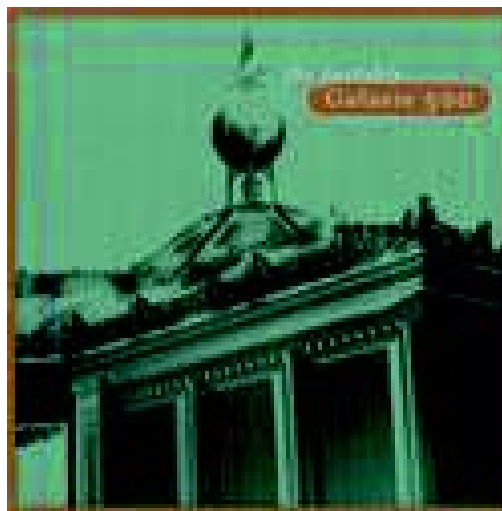
The Best Album You've Never Heard...

By Joshua Edward
Whalesong Staff

Review: *The Portable Galaxie 500*, Galaxie 500, 1998
Rykodisc

For the uninitiated, a quick recap: three friends meet in highschool in New York. All subsequently attend Harvard University, where they form Galaxie 500, in 1986. The group releases three albums before calling it quits in the early 90s. By now you may find yourself asking: why a review of an album released in 1998 that compiles material from the 80s and 90s? In my defense, I did title this lil' column "the best album you've never heard," and I never promised anyone that all my reviews would be of brand new material. Got it? Now back to the music...

Galaxie 500 is, quite possibly, the best band you've never heard. They were, to put it mildly, *sublime*. They were also incredibly overlooked. While other Massachusetts college bands made radio waves in the early 90s (Pixies, Dinosaur Jr.), Galaxie 500 had to look to Europe for recognition; in fact, most listeners in the states were never even aware of their existence until well after the band members parted ways. It wasn't until the late 90s that the Galaxie crew started to get their proverbial props as one of the most influential bands in the emergence of "alternative music" (like "world peace," "budget surplus," and other Clinton-era catchphrases, "alternative music" now sounds both dated and wonderfully naive...). With the recent



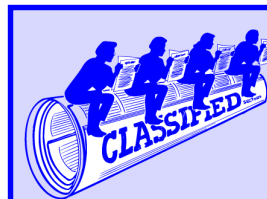
emergence of "new-old-new-wave" soundalikes like Interpol, Galaxie 500 are once again popping up as the little college band everybody emulates.

The sounds speak for themselves: at once cacophonous and elegiac, *The Portable Galaxie 500* is one of the most timeless albums ever, as relevant today as any of the myriad of new releases trotted out each week.

Why You Should Buy This Album: Sounds like these never go out of style.

Standout Tracks: Snowstorm, Tugboat

Sounds Like the Illegitimate Lovechild of: The Velvet Underground, Joy Division



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