

Also known as "The Man with the Rolodex," Kevin Rankin, a Portland resident for less than six years, has established an impressive network of local music people. "I've met a lot of amazing musicians and I feel really well connected for a lot of Portland musicians in the Northwest," said Rankin.

"I've been like this conduit the last few months in helping people get into these band projects; it's really funny. I have this drummer data base of like thirty drummers," said Rankin. And if you're one of the many bands in Portland desperately seeking a drummer, you may not be laughing. Unless, of course, you're one of the many who also have met Rankin. "It seems like there's about ten bands locally that I really feel proud to have connected [with] other musicians; that I have kind of helped to build their stable base," said Rankin.

Rankin is even better known as one of the most talented drummers in Portland. Exposure to a lot of artists, including his father and an uncle who is a jazz drummer in Chicago, inspired him to pursue drumming. At seventeen years of age, his father introduced him to virtuoso jazz bassist Rob Kohler, who he soon after played with at his first gig in Billings, Montana. He grew up ten miles outside of Bozeman in the mountains. "I could set up my kit outside and play and just hear my drums echo off the canyon walls, it was the coolest thing in the world," said Rankin.

"My musical education came from on the road playing in bands. Playing cover bands, playing original bands and playing with people that were better than me. I surrounded myself with people better and I always had to struggle and catch up," said Rankin.

After four years of college at MSU, where he received a degree in Sociology with a minor in Music Studio Teaching, he headed for the City of Roses. After leaving Bozeman at a mind-numbing 40 below, he arrived at the gorge where it was in the 60's and actually green. He decided this was a place he would like to be. He took in as many bands as he could and as an experiment auditioned for three bands, two of which wanted him, and then went back to Bozeman for a few months to save up enough money to make the move.

Soon after he permanently moved to Portland, Rankin saw On a Llama. He was impressed with the band and within a month was subbing with them. At the time the band had been touring for years as a cover band, including USO tours in the Persian Gulf, and they had only a small following. Rankin exercised his talents as rapport-builder, and ended up

heavily promoting shows, getting merchandise in stores, and doing radio promotions throughout the Northwest. "You don't have to get out there and be a marketing person," said Rankin. "All you have to do is just tell somebody, 'Come out to the gig,' and just get one person out there... Lea [Krueger] has this charisma on stage and the songs were really strong... We had this mailing list that just exploded."

Towards the end of the four years Rankin spent with On a Llama, the project became more of Krueger's deal and less of a collective band. The musicians were writing their own parts but received no credit for songwriting, and what Rankin described as Krueger's "manic roller coaster" created conflicts

music scene to refocus. And what better way than to drop down to L.A. and check out the NAMM show, where he met some of his heroes and favorite drummers like Eric Singer (KISS), Danny Carey (Tool), Kenny Aronoff (Smashing Pumpkins, John Cougar Mellencamp), and Dave Abruzzese (Pearl Jam). But only about six weeks passed before he replaced Eric Singer in 281F (with Jeff Labansky).

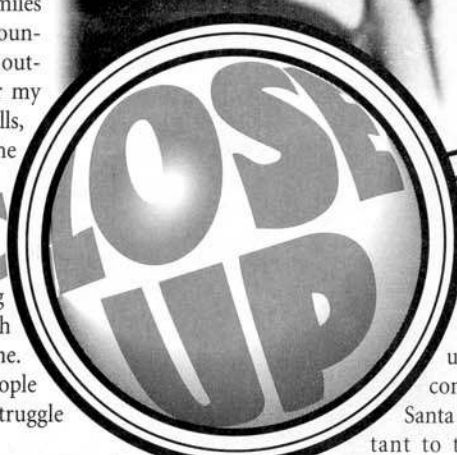
It is hard to believe how many projects Rankin has been involved with lately. He has been recording recently with artists Nicole Campbell, Robert Rude, Brian Cutler, Sue Owens and Toni Land. He also has been working with Generator. In the last six months he created a web page for them, worked publicity and

booked their shows with big acts like Joe Satriani and Gary Hoey.

While drumming for Nicole Campbell, Finn, John Thayer, Sue Owens and Toni Land (yes, the man has been gigging with five bands at the same time), a really big gig came his way: his wife Jennifer and he are expecting a little Rankin in May. "In a few months after we have the baby and after I can refocus priorities, I'm going to come out with another project and I think this time, rather than supporting, it will be my own... There are a few musicians in town that I really want to play with, and rather than starting with the band ground zero, hopefully take a collective of some artists that are already established and just make something happen next year. Ninety-nine. That's the



photo Buko



Kevin Rankin

by Susan Connell

between members of the band. With a potential publishing deal with Warner-Chappell, an upcoming management contract with a company in Santa Barbara, and a band reluctant to talk about percentages, Rankin met with a lawyer for advice. It appeared that he would get less than fifteen percent. "I was thinking, OK, so we get the big deal, beyond the publishing deal, and I'm still working my day job to commute? Just to pull this gig off while you guys are taken care of with royalties and touring advances? They said if that's what it takes," said Rankin. The

year," said Rankin.

Rankin can occasionally be heard on The Voice (1010AM), an independent radio station dedicated to supporting local music. Rankin guest hosts once in a while on the "Morning After Show," which was created by Pat Patterson. "I'm really impressed with a lot of music locally. A lot of people *dis* bands like the Dandy Warhols and Everclear... but even if you feel that band is stylistically so far from what you would ever want to be, the fact that they have that recognition brings the spotlight to Portland. And it's going to do nothing but benefit you if you have some substance... It's really easy to judge, but if you can't deliver, get in the ring. That's the bottom line: get in the ring," said Rankin.

Many times referred to as "the Nicest Guy in

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band appeared to be more of a vehicle to propel Krueger to the next level, and he couldn't see any of the other band members going with her. Rankin quit On a Llama in January.

Rankin took a short break from the Portland

Music," Rankin has definitely created an important place for himself in the Portland music scene. Rankin will be playing only a few more gigs this month before taking some time off for his family.

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