

Feather Falls Brewing Company's
9th Anniversary Party

Featuring

GREG KIHN BAND

THURS, DEC. 5 • 8PM

NBC called Greg Kihn "Rock's True Renaissance Man." His career stretches from the dawn of punk and indie rock to the discos of the 80's to the glory days of MTV.

"The Breakup Song"

"Jeopardy"

"Lucky"

"Happy Man"

GENERAL ADMISSION &
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VIP SUITES: \$300

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 Must be 21 or older

ARTS DEVO

by JASON CASSIDY • jasonc@newsreview.com



GUITAR ROCK IS NOT DEAD **Black Midi** is a genre of electronic music that features computer-assisted compositions made up of so many notes—millions, literally—that when the songs are expressed as notation, the entire sheet of music is blacked out. You have to look it up on YouTube to understand; without visuals, you'll never get a sense of it. The fact that English rock group Black Midi took its name from something that is a challenge to wrap your head around is fitting. As with its namesake, the band has to be experienced to be understood.

Arts DEVO bore witness to the much-hyped four-piece last Thursday (Nov. 21), during an exhilarating performance at the **Rickshaw Stop in San Francisco**, and though it's tempting to say, "You had to be there," I'll try and do better than that.

The four dudes in Black Midi have been out of high school for only a couple of years. Yet even before the band's debut album, *Schlagenheim*, was released this past summer, they'd earned breathless praise from the English press on the intensity of their live shows and a handful of internet videos—especially a weird and intriguing set that Seattle radio station **KEXP** posted to YouTube. The incongruous footage features what appears to be four teenagers coolly melting the faces off an audience at an Icelandic hostel with mathy, noisy art rock. That was my introduction, and I was hooked on the impressive blending of elements from many genres—experimental noise, jazz, math rock, prog, worldbeat, Kraut rock, metal, funk, punk—into something uniquely driving and complex, yet not overstuffed or showy.



Black Midi at Rickshaw Stop
 PHOTO BY JASON CASSIDY

Last week's show was the band's first in San Francisco on what is its first U.S. tour, and tickets that originally sold for \$15 were posted on resale sites for \$70-plus.

Black Midi immediately lived up to the hype as it kicked down the doors with the album opener, "953," a hard-charging rocker that presented the band's bona fides. It started with a dizzying and distorted odd-timed guitar progression that immediately whipped the crowd into a frenzy and showed off drummer **Morgan Simpson**'s otherworldly chops with his ability to thicken/intensify an already impressive noise to the point that it felt like the building might come down. Damn impressive.

Mid-set jam "Ducter" was the most memorable. Built at first on two insistent riffs from guitarists **Geordie Greep** and **Matt Kwasniewski-Kelvin**, before being joined by bassist **Cameron Picton**'s own loop, the song wound up the tension thanks to a frenetic groove that appeared to trip over itself as Simpson purposefully dropped and added beats. After a sudden quiet release, the room was overwhelmed by impressive guitar noise in many shifting forms—fuzzed-out marches, storms of feedback, and overdriven treatments of the core riffs.

No matter the level of chaos or the abrupt shifts in dynamics, the band—especially Picton and the intense-looking Greep—appeared unfazed. The contrast was striking, and it brought to mind a line regarding **Hannibal Lecter** in the movie *Silence of the Lambs*: "His pulse never got above 85, even when he ate her tongue." Despite the fact that the band members aren't old enough to drink in the U.S., they seem to already have full confidence in their vision. Or maybe they've been coached on their presentation and on how making a memorable first impression can transform hype into mystique. If the latter, it worked.

The only bummer of the night was that Black Midi wasn't able to finish its full set. A blown amplifier put a halt to the proceedings. After which the band just simply walked off the stage. It was the perfect move.