

What's Happenin': April 16 - 22

Written by Mike Schulz
Wednesday, 16 April 2008 02:01

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The Diplomats of Solid Sound featuring The Diplomettes

Rock Island Brewing Company
Saturday, April 19, 10 p.m.



The Iowa City soul ensemble The Diplomats of Solid Sound has released songs titled "Bullfrog Boogaloo," "Alligator Boogaloo," and "Grease Monkey," so I assume that PETA's kinda thrilled. Of course, others titles in the group's discography include "Hurt Me So," "Plenty Nasty," and the CD *Aphrodisiac*, so I assume that PETA's also kinda concerned.

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Playing the Rock Island Brewing Company on April 19, the band performs in the classic style of soul icons James Brown, Booker T & the MGs, and The Ventures, and has jazzed festival and club audiences nationwide with its tight, energetic blend of saxophone, organ, and drums.

Though formed in 1998, it wasn't until 2006 that the Diplomats expanded their boys' club to include vocalists Sarah Cram, Katharine Ruestow, and Abbie Sawyer as The Diplomettes - described by the *Kansas City Star* as "three gifted soul sirens." And since then, the musicians have toured Italy, France, and Spain, contributed music to the TV series

Reaper,

and released the CD

The Diplomats of Solid Sound Featuring The Diplomettes

, which the group's MySpace page says is "guaranteed to groove its way into your head and your ass."

I actually came up with about a dozen different punchlines for that quote. None of them were suitable for print.

The ensemble's RIBCO gig begins at 10 p.m., and more on the group is available at (<http://www.thediplomats.org>).

Pippin

St. Ambrose University

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Friday, April 18, through Sunday, April 20



It was 20 years ago this month that I appeared in a college production of the Stephen Schwartz/Bob Fosse collaboration *Pippin*, and on April 18, St. Ambrose University debuts its own version of the long-running Broadway smash. I'm thinking they could've just celebrated the anniversary with a nice party and some video montages of my work, but hey, I'll take this, too.

Set during the reign of Charlemagne, circa 780 A.D., *Pippin* is a highly fictionalized, highly energetic musical-comedy celebration of the Holy Roman Empire (not a lot of *them*

around ...), and the show's 1972 debut made a stage legend of Ben Vereen, whose performance as The Leading Player earned him a Tony Award for Best Actor in a Musical. The song-and-dance spectacular also received Tonys for Scenic Design, Lighting Design, and both Director and Choreography for Fosse, and plenty of crowds had the opportunity to witness his genius; with a total of 1,944 performances,

Pippin -

which has yet to be given a New York revival - is currently the 27th-longest running musical in Broadway history.

I have to say, I'm looking forward to St. Ambrose's take on the material, as I haven't seen the show on stage since I was the Leading Player's understudy in college, and

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Hey, quit laughing! I ain't Ben Vereen, but I got *skills*, baby!

For tickets to *Pippin*, call the Galvin Fine Arts Center box office at (563) 333-6251.

Genesis Gala: Casino Royale

Davenport RiverCenter

Saturday, April 18, 5:30 p.m.

