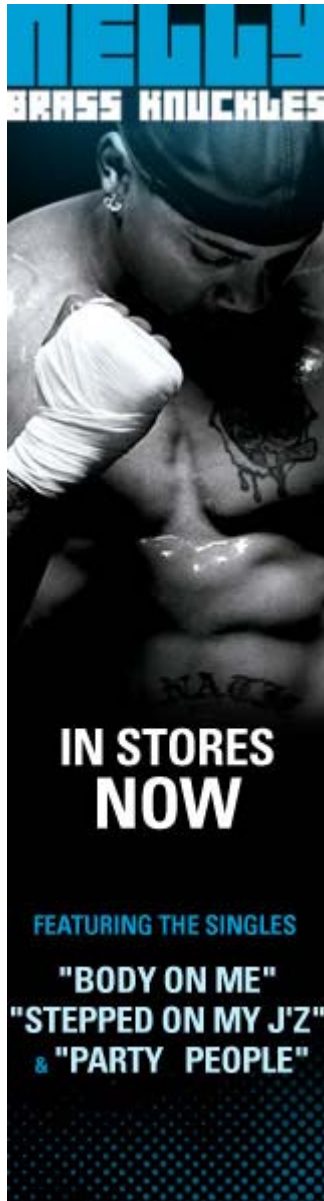




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## Blue Turtle Seduction + Five Eyed Hand + Trevor Garrod

15 August 2008: 12 Galaxies — San Francisco, CA

by [Greg M. Schwartz](#)

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It's always a special moment when a band returns to the scene of one their greatest triumphs to revel in the resonance of that vibe while also seeking to push that energy further. Blue Turtle Seduction are in such a position when they find themselves back at 12 Galaxies in San Francisco's Mission District—the very same venue where the band saved last New Year's Eve for many local music fans.

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It wasn't long ago when the Bay Area was THE New Year's destination for jam rock fans, with multiple headliners at so many shows around town the fans wished they could clone themselves. But this past year was different. Heading into December, the only New Year's rock show of note was Les Claypool at the Fillmore. The show didn't take long to sell out and folks that had waffled for whatever reason found themselves scrambling to find alternate entertainment.

Then an ad appeared for Blue Turtle Seduction's "Hitchhiker's Guide to the 12 Galaxies" show, rife with imagery from Douglas Adams' classic sci-fi novels and heralding a cosmic good time. The eclectic band drew a colorful crowd and threw down a supremely festive show that went deep into the morning, ringing in the New Year with maximum style.

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The South Lake Tahoe band used the show as a launch pad to a much higher local profile, making San Francisco their second home in 2008. They opened for local favorites Tea Leaf Green at the Fillmore in March, and then returned to the city later that month for a free afternoon show at Dolores Park, followed by a raucously packed affair that same evening at the Connecticut Yankee. The CD release party for *13 Floors*, their stellar new album, followed at The Independent at the end of May, all winding toward this New Year's Eve flashback.

Tea Leaf Green keyboardist Trevor Garrod opens the evening with a solo set that draws a bigger than normal crowd for 9 p.m. on a Friday night. It's always refreshing to see a rising star back in a more intimate setting and Garrod doesn't disappoint. It's a tough task playing solo in such a slot, amid early evening barroom chatter. But Garrod rises above it, delivering a set that at times conjures the soulfully bluesy vibe of Eric Clapton's Derek and the Dominoes, as well as a bravura piano solo recalling the outro by Phish's Page McConnell on "The Squirring Coil".

The breakout surprise of the night is Five Eyed Hand. The local quartet hits the stage with a powerful jam that instantly grabs the audience's attention. When drummer Derek Bodkin throws in a whistling solo, it's clear this is no your average band. Bodkin later sings and plays acoustic guitar, demonstrating wide skills. Bassist Jeb Taylor is a groove monster, while guitarist Chris Zanardi and mandolinist/fiddler Mikey Henderson both demonstrate virtuoso skill on a spacey funk jam that conjures the Jerry Garcia Band in an extended workout on "After Midnight".

You know you're doing something right when you attract members of more established bands to sit in with you, and so it is when both Garrod and BTS mandolinist Christian Zupancic join Five Eyed Hand for a stellar take on the Beatles' "It's All Too Much". Melodic psychedelia reigns supreme in a great extended jam version of the classic George Harrison tune.

BTS hits the stage with "What's My Name", the rousing opener from their new album that somehow blends Irish folk with punk and funk. "El Camino" features Zupancic on fiddle and guitarist Jay Seals on lead vocals for another groovy funk/punk/folk rave-up that evolves into a deep space rock jam that gets the room really grooving. Drummer Adam Navone and bassist Stephen Seals aren't flashy, but provide a rock solid rhythm section that enables Zupancic to improvise freely throughout the night.

The show really takes off with "Roses > Belt Buckle", the closer from *13 Floors*. Zupancic and Seals both throw down super funky riffs that set the stage for singer Glenn Stewart to deliver some soulful, upbeat vocals that strike a chord. From his earthy demeanor to the tall boy cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon he quaffs throughout the night, Stewart evokes a man of the people vibe. The band riffs on the main theme from *Star Wars* during the jam, sending the positive vibe higher still. Stewart, Zupancic, and Jay Seals blend their voices for rich three-part harmonies in the final section, adding yet another element to the band's sound.

"Steady Unease" cools things off with a mellower vibe, which is just as well with the poorly ventilated room quickly turning into a hot box. The band rocks it at the end though, raising the energy high enough to launch into

"Antidote", one of a handful of tunes on *13 Floors* that sound as though they could become classics. There's a catchy, feel good vibe in both the harmony vocals and instrumental lines that gets the entire crowd going for another peak moment.

The Turtles are riding a powerful wave now as they roll into "Government", their funky call-to-arms for a people's revolution. Bassist Seals lays down a thick groove while Zupancic fiddles in a compellingly blues-y key behind Stewart's gritty vocals. The chorus turns upbeat when the vocal trio sings "It's time for the leaders to hear / The golden rule must replace the fear / What's done to you is also done to me / The people must lead for the leaders to see." The socially conscious lyrics and big groove energize the crowd further as Zupancic's fiddle leads the band in a monster jam recalling the String Cheese Incident on their epic crowd pleaser "Rivertrance". The huge jam seems as though it will end the set but the band throw a cherry on top of the sundae with a raucous cover of the Ramones' "I Wanna Be Sedated".

The second set builds on the energy of the first and features more of the band's older tunes. But the clear highlight is "Foot by Foot" (another new song that already sounds like a classic) from *13 Floors* that takes the listener through an impressively diverse sonic landscape. It's already a sure-fire crowd pleaser, sending fans into a dance frenzy. Guitarist Seals takes the lead vocal, with the band artfully mixing in a variety of elements to build the song. The infectious chorus explodes with energy as Zupancic adds a harmony and Stewart a counterpoint vocal.

The band interaction that's a hallmark of the jam scene's community vibe appears again when Five Eyed Hand's Mikey Henderson joins in for "Changing Lanes", as the 2 a.m. hour passes and patrons are forced to down their drinks or give them up. But the band plays on before wrapping the set with another rocking jam. The return to the scene of their New Year's triumph has been blessed with a special vibe and thereby seems to call for a special encore. Tea Leaf Green's Garrod reappears on keyboards and vocals to join the band for a triumphant rendition of the Traveling Wilburys' "Handle with Care", an appropriately sentimental flashback on a night full of them.

— 9 September 2008

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