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Time Out Chicago / Issue 125: July 19-25, 2007

Top live show



Photo: Kurt Gellersted

## Erik Friedlander

Elastic; Jul 26

It's not a stretch to say it: No musician has better straddled the closing gaps between rock, classical and jazz than New York-based cellist Erik Friedlander. A first-call musician for everyone from indie-rock darlings the Mountain Goats to avant-garde hero John Zorn to R&B celeb Joss Stone, Friedlander has consistently demonstrated the alluring capabilities an open set of ears can bring you.

The son of the influential photographer Lee Friedlander, known for his portraits of jazz musicians (and much more), Erik spent his childhood traveling in a camper with his family, and that '60s road-trip experience informs his latest CD, *Block Ice & Propane* (Skipstone). At the album's peaks, Appalachian melodies are treated with the reverence of devotional prayer; in the valleys, it evokes a once-removed, tourist's-eye view of the landscape, handicapped by passionless, folksy shorthand gestures and backwoods caricature (not so coincidentally, like Bill Frisell). For those used to the wide sonic palette invariably demonstrated each week by Chicago's own Fred Lonberg-Holm, Friedlander may at first come across as a tight-buttoned traditionalist. But Friedlander merely wants to widen the cello's traditional role; instead of effects pedals and amps, he uses only his luxuriant trad cello technique of plucks and bowing.

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For this rare Chicago gig, Friedlander also will collaborate with the city's most versatile drummer, Tim Daisy (Vandermark 5, Rempis Percussion Quartet). Capable of both rice paper-thin percussion and stampeding Afrobeat, Daisy will have to navigate new terrain with Friedlander on board. Both parties likely will bring out new sides of each other.—*Matthew Lurie*

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