



The American Girls' frontman, Higgins (center), is living his dream of being a rock star. However, he and the rest of the band want to remain personable and accessible to their fans.

Courtesy Trauma Records

The American Girls meet the American dream

Fans' support continues to grow as the Oregon band's success and popularity soar

By Lisa R. Griffing
Oregon Daily Emerald

For the past five years, local rockers The American Girls have been doing more than just playing guitars and singing melodies. According to lead singer and University of Oregon alumnus Higgins, the group is more than just an image. He doesn't want the band to lose their individuality and become prima donnas as their popularity grows.

"A factor that makes them unique is that they are good at replying to the fans' e-mail. They are personable," said Faye Alhadeff, a fan who owns all four of the band's albums.

Ashlin Salisbury is a sophomore at the University and another aficionado of The American Girls. She appreciates their animated concerts and unique persona.

"I remember the first time I saw The American Girls," Salisbury said. "It was at WOW Hall. It was amusing because Higgins looked like Robert Smith from The Cure. When Higgins sang, The American Girls exuded this magnetism. It was great. After that, I was hooked."

The American Girls are gaining recognition as they play concerts and release albums. The American Girls consist of lead singer Higgins, guitarist Scott Georgis, trumpet and keyboard player Gus Baum, bassist and backup vocalist Aaron Mason, and drummer and backup vocalist Ezra. They

have been with the record label Trauma for a year and a half, which is also Bush's record label. Most of the American Girls are natives of Northern California and graduated from the University. In the past, The American Girls performed in California, but Higgins believed it "didn't nurture them for what they are musically."

"Music doesn't survive without nurture. There are too many one-hit wonders. I like small labels because our group doesn't want to be a number," said Higgins, who graduated from the University with a degree in theater.

Higgins provided Pulse with some insight on The American Girls in a recent interview.

Q: What do The American Girls do in their spare time?

A: "Watch movies, play basketball, and we hang out."

Q: What are your musical influences?

A: "Each other, local bands. I really enjoy British rock."

Q: You remind some fans of The Cure. Do they influence your music?

A: "Well, I listen to The Cure religiously, so I would say so."

Q: What was your best show?

A: "Hmm. That's a good question. They are all good, but I would have to say the best show was when we played with the Cherry Poppin' Daddies at Cuthbert [Amphitheater]. There were 5,000 people there with so much energy. We feed off of everyone else's energy, and we like to jump around."

Q: What songs do you sing in the shower?

A: "I get the most random horrific songs in my head. But, lately I would say Coldplay's 'Everything's not lost.'"

Q: If you could meet any famous person, whom would you meet?

A: "Let's see. Robert Smith [lead singer of The Cure]. I would love to meet Bruce Willis. I used to love Michael Stipe [lead singer of R.E.M.]. He has a very human side where he really looks at the audience."

Q: What would you say is your most emotional moment at a concert?

A: "When I met a girl and sang about her."

Q: What makes The American Girls unique?

A: "Our ability to keep contradicting ourselves. We write songs we like to listen to. We are our biggest fans."

Q: What do you mean by The American Girls' ability to contradict yourselves?

A: "When I write a song, what I am saying differs by the day. Sometimes there are happy melodies with depressing lyrics, and sometimes it's happy lyrics. I think that sad songs are the best though. In ballads, your words resonate."

Q: What is the band's genius?

A: "Getting with four people and coming up with something and getting someplace with it. It is pure joy to play a song we just created and that creation is pure genius."

Q: What emotions do your songs convey?

A: "I write lyrics from my heart. At a show years ago in

Eugene at the battle of the bands, someone said, 'Your lyrics affected me.' Regardless of what I mean by it and the lyrics affected someone — it is the ultimate compliment."

Q: When do you write songs?

A: "Every day, I write a new song so I can sing it to my dog George, a female English bulldog. She is the best dog in the world."

Q: When is your new album coming out?

A: "I'm not sure. We really don't know yet."

Q: What is your favorite song on your upcoming album?

A: "I would say 'Unadvertised.' I love sad songs, and this one is a ballad about not being good enough for someone and realizing it."

Q: Is being a star how you imagined it to be?

A: "You get to a point where there are so many triumphs and downs in the music business. I am thankful that people care. I love performing, but I don't want to lose my personability."

Q: How do you feel about people downloading your music from Napster?

A: "I don't mind it. I want people to hear it. I like responses — even ambiguity. If people like a band, they will buy a record."

Q: What is your philosophy in life?

A: "Everything revolves around love. If something doesn't relate to love, it's not important. Love conquers all."

Q: Growing up, what did you want to do with your life?

A: "I always wanted to be in love and onstage. I am living my dream."

Although Higgins feels that The American Girls are their own biggest fans, Alhadeff, Salisbury and others like them may prove him wrong. Salisbury has been to seven concerts, and Alhadeff has been to eight.

"Eight is not enough," she said.

When asked what makes The American Girls unique, Alhadeff replied, "They always look like they are having fun on stage, so we have more fun."

Salisbury likes "their vibrancy. Oh man, when Gus dances, it's so adorable. He has this hip action going on," she said. "They are just fun to groove to. I also like their name: The American Girls. There are no women in the band, so it's a kind of irony."

Salisbury said that her favorite song is "Dumb Crush" because "I can relate to the feeling behind the lyrics." Alhadeff chose the song "More of Me Less of You" as her favorite because "it's an all-around fun song that is great for audience participation. Oh yeah!"

Alhadeff described The American Girls' music as "rock with horns with a Cake-ish mixture; it's eclectic."

The American Girls won't be coming to Eugene for several months. Their January concert in Eugene was canceled because of Bob Marley's birthday, but they will be coming to Eugene sometime in April. Those 21 and older can catch them at their Portland venues. Check out their Web site at www.theamericangirls.com for further information.