

just entertainment

Motherlode hits rich vein

Contemporary folk with a mixture of political and current issues, Motherlode's songs mean something to the audience

BY KATE WELLS

To their fans in Portland, "Motherlode" has become synonymous with local success, sellout crowds and the potential for a bright future in the music business.

All that is from four women who take to the stage to be themselves and play music that has meaning for everyone. With their second album selling well — more than 2,000 copies so far — and a successful California tour behind them,

Music

Motherlode comes home to Portland on April 23 to play at the Northwest Service Center. You can bet the place will be packed.

They're not musicians by profession; Nan Collie, Kathleen Fallon, Marie Eaton and Janet Peterson all work at other jobs full time. It's just that music is their passion — and their music is fast becoming the passion of a lot of people in the Northwest.

"I think we appeal to a fairly broad range of people," Eaton said when interviewed just after an International Women's Day appearance in March. "Definitely the women's community has supported us all along, but because our music is inclusive, we appeal to older people, political people — quite a wide range."

Describing its music as "contemporary folk

with a mixture of political and current issues," the group says its songs mean something to the audience.

"Our music stays spontaneous," Collie said. "We address issues, yet we all have a note of hope."

"We also have a lot of fun together on and off the stage," she continued. "It's fun to play with an audience. It feels like we're all singing together; that the circle is complete."

"I think partly what works is that we are who we are; we're not so different on stage from the way we are in the living room," Collie added.

Motherlode has achieved a real cohesiveness since its members met eight years ago at the Puget Sound Guitar Workshop, and they attribute much of their success to the strength of their personal relationship and commitment to each other.

"A band is just like any other relationship," Fallon said. "The longer you're together, the deeper things go . . . and so the music has more depth."

"Of course, we have our struggles and our disagreements," Eaton added, "but we keep working on it, because what we have is too precious to give away or to lose."

What they have is a music that grows richer each time they perform — and an increasing audience to support it.

"We're constantly taking risks on stage," Peterson said. "We're creating up there. And risk-taking is growing: every time we come off the stage, we've risked a tiny bit more, and we've



Motherlode

Photo by Ginny Given

grown."

"Something happens on stage that makes it work," Fallon added. "We have that trust that we'll all figure it out, that we can get out there and get the message out."

Sales of their albums have helped get the message out, too. Although the decision to record was a difficult one, it's something band members say they feel good about.

"The step we took to make the first album was a giant step," Eaton said. "We had a lot of meetings about it; it was like having a baby."

"That was the moment we stopped pretending and became real," Fallon added, smiling.

"I think our second album is more interesting, because we branched out," she said. "We used a lot of our own material, but added new pieces by other people."

Making the albums has strengthened the group, too.

"The process of recording adds glue to the group," Collie said. "When you're in there recording, you're under a microscope. It felt like family. It was a real cohesive group effort."

Songs such as "Everything Possible," "Walls and Windows" and "Nicaragua" are familiar ones now to Northwest audiences and are met with a warm reception every time they're performed. And, of course, there's always "Pie Shop."

"We've done 'Pie Shop' a million times, but each time it's like we really get into this song," Eaton said. "It's passionate."

What's next for Motherlode?

"We aren't driven by goals, but we would like to expand by playing in some festivals and doing more traveling. Locally and regionally we're doing well, and we feel good about that," Collie said. Motherlode will appear at the Folklife Festival in Seattle in May and hopes to travel "perhaps in the Midwest and on the East Coast," she added.

"We continue to write, and our arrangements are getting more intricate," Peterson noted. "We're expanding, and as we get more versatile, our songs have more depth."

"I think we really do celebrate life with all its complexities," Collie summed up. •

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