

MUSIC

THE INFINITE XS
The Infinite Xs •
Chainsaw Records



So a few years ago you threw in the towel and finally conceded that all new music is shit. You stopped buying CDs and reading pop culture magazines, you stopped going to shows.

Well, folks, I'm here to tell you: Go buy the Infinite Xs record. It will make you believe in new music again.

The band is composed of four recognizable players: Jody Bleyle, who made a name for herself as the outspoken member of two former Portland groups, Hazel and Team Dresch; Tamala Poljak and Scotty Walsh, who, along with Bleyle, were once with Automatics; and Whitney Skillcorn, former singer/guitarist for Fighter D.

All talented, all queer.

The self-titled record features three distinct songwriting voices (Bleyle, Poljak and Skillcorn) but is masterfully pieced together, so it flows with both the ease of a meandering stream and the spunk of whitewater rapids.

Bleyle's songs are deep and ferocious, true, mortal, yet invincible. One of her contributions is powerfully titled "What I Believe." She belts, "I believe good things are gonna come/that's what I believe/I believe inspiration will fill my lungs/that's what I believe," and later, "I believe that vision will come, and the fear will go."

Poljak is like Paul McCartney's evil dyke sister, writing pop songs that stick to you like dirty

Believe in new music

Just Out finds a bunch of Portland queers making some damn fine sounds

underwear. "Joanna" is an infectious, '80s-style dance number; "Shoot 'Em in the Foot" and "Brand New Reconnection" are hard-rocking and hook-filled.

Skillcorn has the grittiest style of the three, but it's also sensitive and beautifully emotive. "The Body's Beat" seems to be about her deep relationship to music and music's deep relationship to love. On this song, she's composed seamless time signature switches, so the music itself moves like a confused, tormented dancer.

Riding on the strength of these uniquely powerful female songwriters, the Infinite Xs has something almost every single new group doesn't: talent.

Talent, folks.

It's enough to make you forget you gave up on music in the first place.

—Katy Davidson

GARAGEPRO

Leila Chieko Trio • Self-released

It's a wonderful thing to be surprised. For example, when I was given the *Garagepro* EP (available at Music Millennium and Borders in Portland and CD World and Mother Kali's in Eugene) by the Leila Chieko Trio, I took one look at the shoddy, home computer-generated cover and thought to myself, "This is totally gonna blow."

But when I put on the CD, I found myself wanting to listen, wanting to learn more about Leila, rocking out.

I found myself in a pleasantly hazy world of grunge, blues and rock music. I found myself on the Internet, reading through her lyrics (at www.leilaleila.com), bonding with her about womanly love and its joys and misfortunes.

Chieko is a Hawaiian Portlander who plays the drums whenever she's not heavily riffing on her guitar or belting out lyrics, which she does often at local clubs.

Garagepro (named after the band's practice space, perhaps) opens with "Silver Rings," a catchy tune about two women torn apart. I detect traces of Melissa Etheridge and Ani DiFranco in her singing style and traces of Soundgarden and Nirvana in her riffs. It wouldn't faze me to find some old metal records in Chieko's collection. I can respect this.

Equally as respectable, the singer shows a more delicate side on the third track, "Swept Off." It's slow and it has a pretty piano intro, giving the mostly rocking EP some breathing room.

Chieko's style is a little too recycled to change the world. But her raw talent is enough to surprise even the most skeptical critic.

—KD

THE NARCISSIST
Rory Merritt Stitt •
Self-released



The music of Portlander Rory Merritt Stitt is an eclectic fusion of Techno-Sondheim-Bowie with snatches of Fats Waller

thrown in for good measure. *The Narcissist* (available at Music Millennium and Everyday Music in Portland) has it all—haunting melodies, riveting rhythms and synthetic sound—juxtaposed over a solid foundation of jazz piano.

While much of the music world is busily racing from retro to pure acoustic, Stitt rides an atom splitter of synthesized percussion right through the heart of Yanni. "Crazy Horse" harnesses together multiple rhythmic schemes, which then toss the listener along the bucking path blazed by the lyrics of the song. The rich, dark timbre of his voice embraces the eros of his truth.

Because Stitt is also a visual artist, much of his music evokes strong images. The song "Even in You" exploits a four-chord theme that is restless and repetitive yet bubbles incessantly upward toward the surface.

Stitt is the only two-time winner of the Juneau Symphony Concerto competition and was chosen as one of only 10 new artists to be represented by Unsigned America for further promotion in Europe and Asia.

—Lynn Thomas

KATY DAVIDSON fronts the Portland band *Dear Nora*.

LYNN THOMAS is a Portland-area musician.

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