



Mirah



Ashleigh Flynn

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and musician Ginger Brooks Takahashi. Also in 2003, Mirah began working with Lori Goldston and Kyle Hanson of Seattle's Black Cat Orchestra, resulting in *To All We Stretch the Open Arm*, a collection of anti-war cover songs by artists such as Leonard Cohen and Kurt Weill. Mirah's third solo album, 2004's *C'mon Miracle*, combined the youthful vivacity of her earlier works with a more mature style, leading many critics to hail it as her best work to date and further cementing her place in the alternative music canon. A sonic expedition, *Joyride: Remixes*, was released in 2006 and features dance remixes of tracks from Mirah's three solo efforts by her K Records colleagues such as The Blow, Guy Sigsworth and Anna Oxygen.

Now living in Portland, Mirah divides her time between national and international touring, working on her next solo album and spending quality time at home with her garden and girlfriend. Her latest work, *Share This Place*, a song cycle and multimedia performance based on the lives of insects, was part of last month's Time-Based Art Festival. It featured stop-motion animation created by Seattle animator Britta Johnson. There's no guessing what Mirah will pull out of her magic hat for Siren Nation.

Ashleigh Flynn hails from Kentucky, where she grew up foot-stomping along the Ohio River as the steamboats and barges made their way to the muddy Mississippi. A songwriter of exceptional emotional depth and intelligence, Flynn is also an electrifying performer blessed with unbridled charisma.

Flynn's 1999 eponymous debut album was a collection of postmodern poetry filtered through the lens of rock 'n' roll. Mired in the mythology of her heritage, songs on the album trace everything from the northern isles of her ancestors, railroad lines and hard times to Shakespearean plays and Delphic prophecy. A flurry of media attention throughout the Pacific Northwest (her adopted home territory) and strong sales of the independent release propelled Flynn through hundreds of live performances to the upper ranks of the Northwest music scene.

She followed this impressive debut with 2002's *Chokecherry*, a stunning collection of snappy pop, Southern roots and soulful laments soaring over a swath of percussive acoustics. Banjo, lap steel, acoustic guitar and Dobro crash headlong into drum loops, psychedelic keyboards and screaming slide guitars. Stories of people and place, of loss, of recovery, *Chokecherry* resonates with the power of myth and a raw, natural essence that brings to mind a landscape of Thoreau and Whitman, Neil Young and Lucinda Williams, of Toni Morrison and Robert Hunter.

In 2005 Flynn teamed with Portland bluegrass sensation Sneakin' Out for a live album recorded at Mississippi Studios. *Sneakin' Out with Ashleigh Flynn* features guest appearances by local cellist Skip Von Kuske and national folk hero Tracy Grammer, who enhance Flynn's smoky voice and insightful songwriting with rich string voicing and vocal harmonies. Local literary rock star Tom Spanbauer, reading a passage from his book *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon*, which inspired Flynn's tune "Devil's Pass," introduces this song as a special bonus track on the record.

Flynn has been called on as a soloist to support Michelle Shocked, Jonatha Brooke and Nanci Griffith, among others. With her band, she has fired up local stages for Wilco, Goodness, Laura Love Band, Tony Furtado Band, the Bumbershoot Festival and all manner of Northwest music festivals as well as a monthlong stint on the Chesterfield Bar circuit in Europe following acts such as G. Love and Special Sauce, Emmylou Harris, Widespread Panic and Eagle-Eye Cherry.

Marisa Anderson combines stunning instrumental skill with songs inspired by years of travel and performance with the Dolly Ranchers and the One Railroad Circus. Her guitar playing has been called "lightning fast and sweet as a peach," and her songs are known to bring tears to the eyes of even the most cynical listeners.

In addition to her work as a solo artist, Anderson performs with the Evolutionary Jass Band, an ecstatic jazz/noise ensemble, as well as the Illegal Guardians, a punk trio fronted by an 11-year-old boy. And she coordinates the Girls Rock Institute, an after-school program of Portland's famous Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls.

Anderson's work with Mirah on the song "Nola," a benefit for Gulf Coast hurricane survivors, was featured on the 2006 *PDX Pop Now* compilation. She recently completed work on the soundtrack of *For the Love of Dolly*, a documentary film about everyone's favorite buxom blond country vixen. Anderson's debut solo record, *Holiday Motel*, earned her a nomination for the 2006 Outmusic Awards, an annual ceremony honoring queer musicians. She has performed at festivals such as Ladyfest, Homo-a-Go-Go, the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and Santa Fe's Thirsty Ear Festival. She has shared the stage with artists ranging from Utah Phillips to This Bike Is a Pipe Bomb to The Devil Makes Three. 10

TONY LETIGRE is not named after the Kathleen Hanna band but is glad you think so. E-mail him at anthonyletigre@gmail.com.

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