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Rockabilly, shmockabilly: This is rock 'n' roll!

Portland-based rockers Sallie Ford and the Sound Outside prepare to release the new album "Untamed Beast"

BY SUE ZALOKAR

STAFF WRITER

Sallie Ford plays rock 'n' roll. Just ask her — she'll tell you that she and the band surprise folks sometimes. Or better yet, listen up. She comes by it honestly. She grew up in Ashville, N.C., in a "family of hippies" — talented, creative hippies. Her mother is a music teacher and her father a puppeteer.

Ford says she had to move across the country to find herself. Being surrounded by so many performers, she found it difficult to find her own voice. But find it, she did, dabbling in photography, filmmaking and other artistic pursuits. It wasn't until Ford moved to Portland in 2006 that she began to write her own songs. Since that time she and the band have toured relentlessly and recorded an EP and two full-length albums. The first, "Dirty Radio," came out in 2009 and the second, "Untamed Beast" will be released on Feb. 19.

Sallie Ford and the Sound Outside will play two CD release shows at the Wonder Ballroom in Portland, Ore., Feb. 22 and 23.

Sue Zalokar: You tour a lot.

Sallie Ford: Yeah. Last year was pretty crazy. I still don't know what this year is

going to look like. We just have a rough map. I'm preparing myself to do a lot.

S.Z.: Do you enjoy touring?

S.F.: I do, yeah. It's definitely different than traveling. I think there is an idea, this romanticism about being in a rock 'n' roll band and touring. Of course, then you actually do it, and you realize it's a lot of work. I'm really glad it is part of my job and I want to work hard at it.

We just returned a few weeks ago. We were on a five-week tour. We have been touring a lot in France. It's all a blur at this point. All the shows have been great. That is the important part. We aren't huge partiers, but we let loose every now and then. At this point, I consider Paris my second home.

S.Z.: Your second home? So do you claim Portland as your home now, even though you are from North Carolina?

S.F.: I definitely consider it my home now. It is a great place to come back to. The real struggle for me when I was just living here and not touring was trying to find work where you can make enough money. When I found music, it was a blessing.

S.Z.: How does Portland compare to Paris?

S.F.: A lot of the same music is popular in both places. It was cool. I got to go to the Pitchfork Music Festival while I was in Paris. A lot of the music clubs have some similarities. There are a lot of these clubs that are in sort of the Moulin Rouge district of Paris. Our record label, Fargo Records, also has a record shop. They have a big vinyl selection and a lot of posters on the wall of Portland bands. It's like a little Portland there. They had the "Keep Portland Weird Festival" there this summer I heard. We weren't really a part of it, but they exposed Paris to some Portland bands.

S.Z.: You said that you bought a one-way ticket to Portland to recreate yourself. What was it like to have a blank slate when you moved west?

S.F.: Oh, it was great. I was just kind of open-minded to whatever was going to happen. I got really lucky. I built my life off of just finding people on Craigslist. I found people to live with and a dog from Craigslist. I moved in with all of these young girls who were around my age and I met people who were playing music and house shows. Then I started doing open mics and I met people

who are a part of the music scene. I sort of just decided I should find a band and it just fell in my lap, really.

S.Z.: How did that happen?

S.F.: I met (drummer) Ford (Tennis) because I met a bunch of other Alaskan kids and I was playing a show at Mississippi Pizza. Ford was there and he just had heard about me from one of his friends. He said, "If you ever want to play with a drummer ... I also play with a bass player." The bass player was Tyler Tornfelt.

S.Z.: Is he related to Annalisa Tornfelt, the fiddle player?

S.F.: Yes, they're brother and sister. Tyler was living with her at the time. They had a practice space and we all met up there and played in the basement. Annalisa helped a lot with introducing us to people when we first started playing.

S.Z.: When did you all know that something had clicked for you as a band?

S.F.: We were lucky to meet the Avett

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