

The Free Range Chix

X for Xtra sass and 'tude.

BY JOHN GINN

Ladies, are you (be honest now) no longer a spring chicken? Do you look in the mirror and worry about those encroaching lines and creases around the eyes, those few extra pounds that have settled in, seemingly forever, like rude guests that refuse to leave no matter how bluntly you hint that they're not welcome? Do you worry sometimes that, well, you're just not the young woman you used to be?

If so, the Free Range Chix have an important message for you: Get over it! Believe it or not, you're fabulous. If you want proof, just look at how well the Chix are doing. No spring chickens themselves, they're something much better: They're Chix, damn it. Chix with an X. Free Range Chix to be precise — four funny, spirited women who've put in their time at the family roost. Now, in middle age, they're planning to start having the time of their lives

three years since *Six Women with Brain Death*. You started out because you enjoyed making music together too much to quit. So, what are your goals now?

Chix: Entertain women. Have fun. We'd love to earn money, to be able to travel around and do our thing all over, but fun is definitely up there, equal to everything else. If we weren't having fun, we wouldn't do it.

WHC: Entertain women. But you certainly don't mind if men like you too?

Chix: Oh, no. Not at all! Men do like us because they either live with a woman, or they have in the past, so they can "get" our songs just as much as women do. A lot of couples come and nudge each other, "See! I told you so! I am not the only one!" We try to make sure that everyone who comes to a show goes away with a smile on their face. We have a lot of audience participation, and we're not above going into the audience if we have to get the audience going. You



Chix: Pat Kight (director of *Six Women with Brain Death*) has been wanting to help us put together a show, but if we did we'd want to perform it ourselves. We wouldn't be looking to franchise it. The Chix are too unique! (singing) "Ain't nothing like the real thing baby..."

WHC: This is an amazing week for the group. Nancy is appearing in Albany Civic Theater's production of *The Seven Year Itch*, Stephanie is releasing a solo CD *Stay*

Chix: No, because a lot of it flows right back. A lot of the songs that Vicki wrote for one of her albums she decided worked better as songs for the Chix. And a couple of Stephanie's songs on her CD are now Chix songs, too. So even though it might be a side project, in a way, a lot of the energy does stay in the group.

WHC: Thank you, ladies. Just one last question. What's the feather in your cap, the crowning glory where you say you can call it all good?

Get over it! Believe it or not, you're fabulous.

singing, dancing, and making audiences "laugh until they pee."

With songs like "I Feel Fifty," "Warrior Babe," "All Women Are Beautiful" and "Menopause," the Chix have been taking their mission of laughter and empowerment to mid-Valley audiences for more than three years. They've had sold-out shows at the Majestic Theatre in Corvallis and the Albany Civic Theater but they've also played conferences, fund-raisers and birthday parties — it doesn't matter to them. Wherever a woman needs empowerment or an audience needs to laugh, that's where you'll find the Chix — roaming where they please, proud and confident and humorously taking crap from no one.

And men, if you think the Chix message isn't for you, guess again. The Chix are equal opportunity satirists, always willing to lampoon themselves, too. In one song just for men, coincidentally enough called "Song for Men," they generously reveal a female trade secret. Just as you've always suspected, you truly are damned if you do and damned if you don't. So you might as well laugh about it.

In alphabetical order, the Chix are Nancy Beaudry, Barbara Case, Vicki Hannah Lein and Stephanie Long. Each woman brings a vastly different life experience to the group and the songwriting process. They met as cast members of Albany Civic Theater's 2002 production of *Six Women with Brain Death, or Inquiring Minds Want to Know*. That show turned out to be so much fun that once it was over, the women found it almost physically impossible to not continue with their music making. As they prepared for the release of their first CD, *Free Range Chix - Unclogged*, and an upcoming benefit performance for Hurricane Katrina victims, I was able to get the Chix to settle down for a brief question and answer session.

WHC: I can't believe it's been, what,

shouldn't come to a Chix show and expect to just sit there.

WHC: Your show is very funny, but there are other shows out there — *Menopause, the Musical* for instance — that try to cover some of the ground you do. Have you thought of bottling the Chix and distributing it?

in the Dream, Vickie is releasing a book, *Step Into Your Greatness*, the group is releasing *Unclogged* and you are performing in the Katrina benefit. You all stay very busy. With all the side projects going on, is there ever any fear that the group will suffer for it, that all that energy should have gone into the Free Range Chix?

Chix: (in unison) Oprah. (breaking into laughter). That's what we always say; once we're on Oprah, that's when we'll know that we've really made it.

More information about Free Range Chix, including video and music clips and song lyrics, can be found online at www.freerangechix.net ■

Sweet Home Harmonies

The Brody Lowe Band's sophomore release.

By Alana Yankus

The Brody Lowe Band, an interesting piece of the Corvallis music scene, released their long-awaited album this summer to the delight of friends and fans. The nine-track disk entitled *Everyday Afterwards* is a more serious work with themes ranging from family issues to semi-political and social commentary to everybody's favorite: love - requited or otherwise. Variety extends into the vocals as guitarist and singer/songwriter Brody Lowe shows off his ability to work the rock-y edge and softer stylings.

Everyday Afterwards is a combination of traditional BLB sounds fans will recognize and some newer elements picked up as the band grows and matures. One BLB staple, the sudden, mid-song style change, is present in several tracks such as the revamped "Laugh Out Loud." These sudden changes may seem uncomfortable at first, but keep listening for flashes of brilliance. Overall, the band maintains their Jack Johnson feel, but there are Sublime moments, possibly influenced by Lowe's recent side project, the Sublime-y Evelate.

By far the most compelling and poetic track on the album is the haunting love song "Paper Cut from a Photograph." The simplicity and earnestness of the opening line is some-



thing rarely found in music today. It begins "If I only had one wish, it would be for you to come and wake me from my slumber as you crawl into my bed." What makes these words so wonderful is their very honesty, which provides the opportunity to express these kinds of sentiments without sounding schmoozy.

But what makes the track phenomenal is the ending. Imagine groups who were masterful at layering harmonies like The Mamas and the Papas or The Beach Boys and you might get some idea of the beauty at this song's end. Lowe's talent clearly shows with harmony heaped upon harmony finishing out "Paper Cut" leaving the listener in awe.

This talented foursome has been laying low for a while, but their star is on the rise. With the success of this album and the added support of radio play, expect great things. In the meantime, buy *Everyday Afterwards* at Tower Records or locally at Happy Trails in downtown Corvallis. And, as always, cds are available at every show. For tour dates, info and mp3's check out www.brodyloweband.com