



Juicy, Whimsical Jazzpop

Local debut for the "sharp of mind and young at heart"

Eugene's Jessica Parsons-Taylor grew up on 10 wooded acres in Cottage Grove, "running wild," pretending to be a gnome. She's been singing practically from birth and playing piano since age three, so it's no surprise that this 4' 11" bundle of energy chafed at the restrictions of music school.

Now 22, Parsons-Taylor says the scales and strict exercises "repelled" her. "I was always attracted to music purely for the joy and the passion," she says. She preferred experiencing music rather than talking about it.

Celebrating her debut CD, *The Slower Side of Time*, Parsons-Taylor is definitely living it. The album's cover image of Parsons-Taylor wearing a sophisticated, sexy yellow dress while holding a whimsical red balloon creates a contrast paralleled in her music. "I have a lot of serious or semi-serious subjects like love and longing and loss and all the things people write songs about," she says, "but at the same time I think there's definitely a youthful, playful quality to all of it."

Parsons-Taylor's music is piano-led pop; sparse but not sad, quiet but not som-

niferous, and her voice is intriguingly child-like. A nice clarinet line sets off the simple melody of "Say Anything" while Parsons-Taylor croons to her love that she's "quite prepared to fall, if you'll say anything at all." "Styrofoam Palace" has plucky parts that sound almost like a music box tune. Parsons-Taylor declares that her love, like Styrofoam, may crumble but won't fade away. It sounds silly, but it's a catchy tune highlighting her unique way of describing everyday ideas.

As young as she is, Parsons-Taylor is already gaining national attention.

She's one of ten finalists in the Plowshares Songwriting Contest in Phoenixville, Penn. A songwriter friend told Parsons-Taylor about the contest, and she entered four songs. She flies out to compete for the grand prize on March 31.

Despite Parsons-Taylor's youthful appearance, she's no ingénue. "I always have felt much older than my 22 years," she says. "I've always felt like an old soul." Joining her on stage will be drummer Chris Lay, bassist Mark Schneider and guitarist Tom Teutsch. **EW**

Jessica Parsons-Taylor
8 pm Thursday, 3/29
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