

MUSIC SHORTS

Wide-Eyed & Open-Armed

It doesn't seem possible that the voice – the old-soul voice, sweet and sour and halfway to breaking – that comes from Nelson Kempf is really his own. The cherub-faced Alaskan is half of the **Old Believers**; the other half is the only slightly more worldly-looking Keeley Boyle, whose reserved tones are no less lovely. On their new album, *Eight Golden Greats*, the duo crafts careful, gentle melodies and more propulsive songs that seem to take just a spoonful of new-century swagger and drop it into fireside folk-pop, like a jigger of whiskey into a mug of steaming coffee.

The eight songs have tiny, melancholy titles ("No More," "That's All") and are reflective, as Kempf writes in the band's bio, of the pair leaving Alaska for Portland in late 2006. "Our hopes and fears and memories and dreams were all curling around in our minds, and we did not yet understand they they were not ours, for we were only doing what everyone has always done," he writes of leaving home for the first time. And like that sentiment, familiar but phrased with simple elegance, the duo's songs use strings, spare percussion, Kempf's slightly throaty voice, Boyle's



Old Believers

sweet, sometimes conversational delivery and the self-aware coyness of indie pop to suggest lament and lullaby, celebration and sentimentality. The delicate chords and fuzzy vocals of "Waltz #3" give way, as the album winds to its close, to the restrained build of "The Glories All Been Done," a five-minute set-closer that probably sounds even more wide-eyed and open-armed live. The Old Believers and Bill Mallonee play 9 pm Monday, July 14, at Cozmic Pizza. \$5. – Molly Templeton

Rustling Crow

Susurri, a play on the word susurri (meaning a soft murmuring or rustling sound), is a good name for Jaylene Arnold's mostly solo act. A susurri describes the pianist and vocalist's calm, atmospheric music well.

Arnold, a local musician and newcomer to the Eugene music scene, was classically trained in piano as a child. But eventually she decided that classical music wasn't for her and started experimenting with writing her own songs. The transition from classical musician to impressionistic songwriter was a process of building confidence. She remembers feeling intimidated and running out of the room when some other musicians first invited her to a jam

session because they learned to play by ear, not with sheet music.

Still, she hasn't entirely abandoned her classical training and influences, especially Chopin. "I can't help but incorporate that into my music," she says.

Since graduating this year from the UO with an MFA, Arnold simultaneously turned her music into more than a hobby and landed her first big gig last month. In her upcoming show and EP release at Cozmic Pizza, she performs with fellow solo artist Max Schramm of Blast Wagon. They plan to perform by themselves and accompanying each other.

Susurri and Blast Wagon play at 9 pm Wednesday, July 16, at Cozmic Pizza. \$2. – Inka Bajandas

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