



ALISSA ANDERSON

Less Picking, More Strumming

In terms of idyllic outdoor concerts, few of the Northwest's banquet of offerings match the **Pickathon**. Alas, contrary to what its name might imply, every year, the Pickathon line-up gets a little less hillbilly-twangy and a little more indie-folk-strummy, which might be a disappointment to all the bluegrass purists out there. And yet there's no denying the power of this line-up. Thao and Dr. Dog may be a little bit of a stretch so far as Americana's concerned, but performers like bluegrass legends Mike Compton and David Grier or the Hackensaw Boys keep it real. Plus, just because the Pickathon isn't strictly a roots festival anymore doesn't mean the acts that land well outside the designation aren't worth seeing. Most of the folks on year's roster lie somewhere between Pitchfork-approved hipster fodder and

the homegrown Americana of Pickathon's beginnings: Portland songstress Laura Gibson, folk warbler Alela Diane and Sub Pop representatives Blitzen Trapper (who sound like this generation's CSNY) and Vetiver (finest folk band to come out of the Bay Area in recent memory) manage to combine the best of both worlds. Since you get to camp out, feel free to get as loaded as you please. If getting drunk and listening to banjos isn't as American as apple effin' pie, what is? Pickathon takes place Friday, July 31, through Sunday, August 2, at Pendarvis Farm, near Portland. \$70-\$80 per day; \$120-\$190 weekend pass. www.pickathon.com — Sara Brickner

Post-Punk Joy

Three songs in, I was at a loss for words. **Ribbons** reminded me of ... something. Something on the tip of my tongue. And then their February write-up as Seattle radio station KEXP's song of the day said it

for me: Joy Division. (Why I couldn't come up with freaking Joy Division, I don't know. Blame the heat.) Singer-guitarist-bassist Jenny Logan's wavery, hollow voice sits like a weight atop drummer Sam Roudman's elaborate rhythms. The two videos on the Brooklyn duo's MySpace page suggest the sort of live show where it's difficult to believe there are just two people onstage; Roudman's drums seem to play the part of two or three instruments, and Logan switches deftly between single-note guitar melodies and jangly chords that give the songs an angular, post-punk feel — as does the tension between Logan's narrow, chanty vocals and Roudman's sprawling percussion, which pushes at the edges of each song, pulling her varied guitar lines in its wake. Get your grabby little paws on the band's 2008 album *Surprise Attacks* when they come to town. Ribbons play at 8 pm Friday, July 31, at Black Forest. 21+ — Molly Templeton

Wistful Grace

It's been four years since **Petracovich's** second album, *We Are Wyoming*, a collection of musical still lifes built out of piano melodies, bells and ambience, wound together by Jessica Peters Malmberg's airy but substantial voice. Her new album, *Crepusculo*, is immediately different — though what makes it so isn't as instantly apparent. Her delivery is direct on "Heaven Help the Day," a story about being left by family; "Big Heart," a song that welcomes sorrow and big feelings in equal measure, is sprightly and swelling. But a few songs later, Peters Malmberg is fragile as can be on the delicate "You Are This Perfect." *Crepusculo* is dotted with moments like this; it shifts between lively bits of storytelling and songs that shiver with intimacy.

On her blog, Peters Malmberg tells the stories that led to some of these songs, but no story is as heartbreaking as the post in which she recounts recording *Crepusculo* while pregnant with her first child — only to lose that child eight days after his birth. The rest of Peters Malmberg's inspirations pale and retreat in comparison; after reading her blog, it's almost impossible to listen to *Crepusculo* without my ear snagging on every reference to babies, family, blood, love. The album's last track, the wistful "We Must Have Been Birds," comes in with strange grace, its subtle certainty a relief, a sign of happier things to come. Petracovich plays at 9 pm Friday, July 31, at Wandering Goat. \$5. — Molly Templeton



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