



Kingdom Comes

As I join the members of **Kingdom County** in a corner booth at the Pantry & Pub near 18th and Chambers, it becomes immediately clear to me the local indie-rock quartet is as much a family as a band. Good-natured ribbing and razzing is traded back and forth like rowdy siblings at the dinner table. One-liners are dropped, inside jokes fly freely. Their recently released sophomore album, *Love and War*, is one of the strongest records to come out of the Eugene music scene in quite some time.

A bittersweet song-cycle of acoustic-based indie rock, *Love and War* mixes the lo-fi production of legendary Northwest label K Records with the lush instrumentation of Arcade Fire. But if Arcade Fire tends toward the grandiose and self-important, Kingdom County stays decidedly innocent and fun.

This is not a band bulging with rock-and-roll egos – it takes some prodding for vocalist and primary songwriter Nick Cervantes to admit, “I’m the lead singer.” Instead, Kingdom County is more of a collective in the style of Canadian indie-rock gods Broken Social Scene. Cervantes is quick to assure me that although the band is centered on the lifelong friendship and creative partnership between him and guitarist Josh Humphrey, each member adds something to the mix – whether that be a whistle-solo chorus, a soaring violin melody from Humphrey’s wife Jenny, or charming vocals and playful “miscellaneous” percussion from Claire Catania.

Love and War was recorded in a converted woodshop and mixed in town at Sprout City Studios. “We like to keep it local,” jokes drummer Andrew Harmon. The strongest track on this very strong record is “I’ve Been Waiting for You For So Long,” a sweetly brokenhearted love story that showcases Kingdom County’s finer points: romantic male/female vocal harmonies, driving rhythms mixing acoustic and electric guitars, simple and sweeping string arrangements, and a willingness to take hard musical right turns.

Such traits also define one of Kingdom County’s biggest musical inspirations, Idaho-based indie rockers Built to Spill. In fact, the members of Kingdom County would prefer their trajectory follow the “slow-burn” arc of those Northwest underground legends, as opposed to the unlikely prospect of getting rich and famous overnight. “But we wouldn’t turn it down if it happened,” says Humphrey, smiling slyly.

Kingdom County plays 8 pm Thursday, June 30, at the Axe & Fiddle; FREE. – *William Kennedy*

Musical Fireworks

The Oregon Bach Festival’s second week opens at UO’s Beall Hall Thursday, June 30, with one of the nation’s finest early music ensembles, **Portland Baroque Orchestra**, led by the dazzling early music pioneer and violinist Monica Huggett and performing Benjamin Britten’s charming *Simple Symphony* and choral dances from his 1953 opera *Gloriana*, along with the music of Henry Purcell’s fabulous Baroque opera *Dido and Aeneas*. Then, Saturday, July 2, in the Hult Center lobby the **UO saxophonist Idit Shner and pianist Svetlana Kotova** play a free concert of music by women composers. That same evening, much loved Eugene Symphony conductor laureate **Marin Alsop** returns to the city that really launched her conducting career, toting a rarity: a costumed, narrated, semi-staged version of 20th century Swiss composer Arthur Honegger’s colorful, dramatic – occasionally melodramatic – cantata, *Joan of Arc at the Stake*, whose cinematic, sometimes Impressionist score is performed by the **Schola Cantorum** and OBF orchestra and chorus.

The festival’s **Stangeland Family Youth Choral Academy** seizes the Hult’s Silva stage Sunday, July 3, in a concert featuring music by Portland-born Morten Lauridsen, Portland-based *Do Jump!* composer Joan Szymko, plus Leonard Bernstein’s sublime *Chichester Psalms* and one of Bach’s mightiest cantatas, #147. Hard to imagine a more fun Fourth of July treat than **Portland Cello Project** at Alton Baker Park Monday night. Tuesday, July 5, **Jamie Bernstein** leads a trio and singers in music by her dad, Leonard, America’s greatest man of music. And Wednesday, July 6, features an all-Brahms recital at the Hult’s Soreng Theater by superb young pianist **Shai Wosner**.

Yearning for maritime music? Head for the coast July 1 and hear Igor Stravinsky’s delightfully wry fable “A Soldier’s Tale,” narrated by renowned Oregon actor **David Ogden Stiers**, at Newport’s First Presbyterian Church. Also at the church July 3, **The Newport Symphony** plays music of Aaron Copland, Mozart and Samuel Barber’s poignant *Knoxville, Summer of 1915*, as well as a pops concert on Independence Day. Or you can stay in town July 4 and catch the **Eugene Symphonic Band**’s concert of American music and more at Washburne Park. – *Brett Campbell*



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