

## West Coasting

The thing about **Coasting** is that momentum equates productivity, not stasis – especially when the goal is organically rolling, low-pressure indie rock with teeth. For Madison Farmer and Fiona Campbell, guitarist and drummer respectively, the two-piece Coasting is the rugged touring sister act amongst myriad other DIY siblings around the country. Formed in Brooklyn in 2009, Coasting currently drifts between Memphis and Portland, spitting gritty melodic shoegazing music back and forth.

*You're Never Going Back*, the debut long-play released last November on floating record label M'Lady, sounds like heavy rain falling simultaneously on Glasgow, Olympia and Dunedin, New Zealand, back when indie was a necessity not a style, when punk was about to break big.

Influenced by perpetual motion and bands like The Clean and The Chills, Coasting bridges fast three-minute punk and soft slow-drone coos with cantilevered ease (see: "Kids" and "Snoozefest"). This is the intentional chilling-out of musicians escaping the New York pace but retaining all the intensity.

Reunited to tour, Coasting heads to SXSW via the great Northwest. "We're all over the place," says Campbell. "That's the way we like it." Right now, Coasting is in its element: doing what it wants, where it wants, how it wants to: cruise-control to the next sonic location. As they say in New Zealand, sweet as.

Coasting plays 9 pm Monday, March 5, at Wandering Goat; donations gladly accepted. – *Patrick Newson*



## String Theory



PHOTO BY GREG VAN ANTWERP

It's one thing to be an innovative musician working the confines of your chosen genre; it's quite another to reinvent the instrument you've mastered and revolutionize the way it is played. Grammy-nominated harpist **Deborah Henson-Conant** has accomplished this and more.

An inveterate lover of music and former resident of Eugene, Henson-Conant has given the concert harp a complete and total makeover.

"I fell in love with the harp because of how it was built," she says. "I started playing in restaurants, then I started touring, and I realized I had to change it. The thing was six-feet tall and 75 pounds."

So Henson-Conant set about designing her own harp. She wanted something that traveled easily, but also an instrument that would completely revamp traditional

perceptions of the harp. "I wanted something I could strap on and move with, and I wanted it to have a pick-up on every string," she says.

After landing on the original design and then struggling to find someone to bring her blueprint to life, Henson-Conant finally struck gold. "I took it to France, to a French Harp Company called Camac," she says.

At Camac, the visionary harp builder Joel Garnier constructed Henson-Conant her first harness-harp. But it was his protégé Jakez Françios who continued to work on the designs, going on to create the DHC Light, a sleek chrome harness harp made from the same material as French racing bikes. It is an instrument that did not exist before Françios built it. A lightweight electric harp – the sort of thing you'd imagine Jimi Hendrix playing in heaven.

"Take a guitar and put it on steroids. It weighs 11 pounds, I've got 32 strings to play with and the thing looks like a Stratocaster," Henson-Conant says.

And because it is built like a guitar, Henson-Conant can play it like a guitar. Incorporating looping systems and distortion pedals, the harp presents a physicality that is more or less antithetical to the traditional role of the harp. And Henson-Conant is very aware of the paradigm shift her innovation catalyzed.

"The harp has traditionally been seen as a woman's instrument, relegated to the back of the orchestra," she says. "And I always felt that that relegated women. I wanted to take the instrument and make it strong, powerful and loud."

Strong, powerful and loud is exactly what Henson-Conant continues to do.

Deborah Henson-Conant plays 7:30 pm Wednesday, March 7, at The Shedd; prices vary. – *Dante Zuñiga-West*

## Sound Storm

Anyone who's ever been in a band and grown frustrated by managing three or four different schedules while juggling three or four eccentric personalities would blanche at the prospect of being in **Typhoon**. With a rotating lineup of up to 12 members (who needs one drummer when you can have two?), Portland's Typhoon is the kind of indie group critics fall all over themselves to heap praise upon. This band is emotive – think Conor Oberst of Bright Eyes. The group is lyrically epic and sweepingly romantic à la The Decemberists or Arcade Fire.

Typhoon began life in Salem. Its early recordings show the band dabbling in everything from sea shanties, to Eastern European sounds and country western. In 2010 Typhoon placed second in *Willamette*

*Week's* "Top-Ten Best New Bands in Portland" list and has been carrying the mantle of "next big thing" for some time now.

Last year's release *A New Kind Of House* clocks in like an incomplete sentence at only 22 minutes. But it does a lot in a short amount of time: shouty anthem-like choruses blend with primal rhythms (did I mention two drummers?), mariachi-flavored horn arrangements meet a lush bed of strings, and simple guitar arpeggios back-up vocalist Kyle Morton's warbling tales of sadness and loss – often inspired by his own struggle with Lyme disease as a kid.

Typhoon plays 9 pm Friday, March 2, with Motopony and Ravenna Woods at WOW Hall; \$10 adv., \$12 door.

– *William Kennedy*



## Milk Worth Crying Over

Let's face it, jazz is perplexing: Beyond being compositionally complex and stereotypically highbrow, it's also enigmatic in its far-reaching eclecticism. Most wouldn't look at OG jazz guitarists like Django Reinhardt and find justifiable comparisons with gypsy-punk groups of today – think Gogol Bordello or DeVotchka – but such comparisons are there for the finding. That's probably the coolest thing about local group **Hot Milk**, a band that slots perfectly into a puzzling no-man's-land between jazz and folk – a land that, at least locally, is likely to evoke a soundtrack of groups like Voodooon Moi or Manouche Noir.

Picture edgy, contemporary Klezmer music without the woodwinds and you're on the right track.

The instrumentation is as thorny as it is smooth. From Dusty Carlson's bass playing, through Susan Richardson's enchanting drumming, to Andy Page's dope brass-work, Hot Milk's musical chops are as solid as they come, and Rebecca Conner's lyricism provides the final touch. Her vocals are like strands of silk woven through a loom of sharp seventh chords and syncopated jazz rhythms. The finished product is a soft, groovy musical blanket that's all too fun to wrap yourself in.

Though still young, Hot Milk has been beating out a stormy musical path in recent months; taking no prisoners and, more often than not, leaving behind the ruins of a crowd that just got its mind blown in half. And there's no better way to sum up Hot Milk than with their own words: "We met in a dream and then woke up dancin'."

Go now, and dance with them.

Hot Milk, Eager Beaver and Lower 48 play 9 pm Friday, March 2, at Sam Bond's; \$5. – *Andy Valentine*