



Looking Grimm

After sitting down with the **Strangled Darlings'** latest work, a 12-track LP entitled *Red Yellow & Blue*, it's clear that Portlanders George Veech and Jessica Anderly are comfortable with the sound they've cultivated. Deft, confident songwriting – as haunting as their particular brand may be – is one of the duo's honed talents, and they've set in motion a vessel to prove that freak-folk and pop can hold hands. Their sound is that of an energetic Devendra Banhart (here played by multi-instrumentalist Veech) marrying the weaving, poppy swing of a string band with Black Prairie's eerie style and Jack Johnson's thirst for acoustic grooves.

If there's ever a time to incorporate nursery rhymes – the ones that might sound far more twisted from the mouth of, say, a vaudeville-era ringmaster – it's here, alongside an assortment of disjointed plucks and tweaks that Phil Spector would probably want to shoot himself over. Despite the creepiness and yawning chasms of holey production, *Red Yellow & Blue's* into-the-woods-with-a-banjo-and-fiddle aesthetic fits Veech and Anderly far more appropriately than a wall of sound ever could.

Beyond this, there's a rockabilly characteristic to what would otherwise be considered unique folk-pop, and it lends the duo their mysteriously caustic presence. Hey, there's nothing like a slanted punk undertone to get the feet stomping – and this furthers both the antiquity of the group's sound as well as the downright impishness of their lyrics. Don't be surprised to hear Veech literally howl like the wolf that ate Little Red's gramgram, and don't be shocked if the corners of your own mouth start to curl into a menacing grin as the sound of fun-loving decay washes over you.

Strangled Darlings & Aeon Now play 9 pm Thursday, May 10, at Sam Bond's; \$1-\$5. – *Andy Valentine*

Belting it Out

Pretend for a moment that you're trapped in a bad trip and the only thing you can hear is the cyclical recycling of washed-out psychedelia diluted through decades of designer drugs and synthesizers. The drippy glitches and wobbles are nauseating auditory distractions from a starscape of potential sound. So you listen up, and the points come together as **Orion** belts you back into a more organic, funk-in-the-trunk era without making you feel like you've already come down.

The three musicians holding Orion in place are Cory Howie (bass, guitar and vocals), Aaron Eells (guitar and bass) and Peter Wells, drumming jazz and hip hop into the cold blues and progressive-melodies. Howie and Eells, having played together since high school in Gold Beach, Ore., united with Wells three years ago to form the current incarnation. Now, after a series of booze-fueled runs at the Black(out) Forest, Orion is set to release its eponymous first record.

Recorded in Eugene at Telos Studios and mastered at Unc D Studios in Portland, *Orion* is a rich album that traverses the astral plane and plunges into the rabbit hole. "The Outside" is a loud, raucous, funk-driven blast-off, while "Bob Saget in Space (Part IX)" is a trippy, goofy cool-down before you set the controls for the heart of the sun.

Orion plays with Full Lush and Stein 9 pm Saturday, May 5, at Sam Bond's; \$5.

– *Patrick Newson*

Get It Done with Curtis Salgado

The beauty of the blues is in its "ba-bah-bah-bump my baby she left me" simplicity. The same simplicity makes the blues so easy to parody, but also makes it relatable to so many people and allows other musical styles to easily join the party, like soul, gospel and rock.

Portland's **Curtis Salgado**, one of the Northwest's best-known blues artists (he got his start here in Eugene) is no stranger to local blues enthusiasts. Salgado has built a career playing solid, dependable and competent baby-boomer blues-rock, the stuff of Viagra ads. So I threw on his latest *Soul Shot* on Alligator Records, expecting more of the same. And let me say, expectations are exceeded.

There's been a blues-rock and soul revival running a few years now, with the younger crowd eating up Amy Winehouse, Black Keys, Raphael Saadiq and Mayer Hawthorne (who appears on campus the night after Salgado plays WOW Hall). *Soul Shot* is a high-energy collection – owing more to Marvin Gaye, Isaac Hayes, Temptations and classic Motown than average bar-band blues music. Smooth baby-makin' sounds meet scorching dance numbers, with Salgado adding a healthy dose of soul to his always-evident vocal chops.

So – whether you're a veteran R&B fan in all your grey-haired glory, or a new kid getting into the neo-soul revival planning on catching Mayer Hawthorne's set on campus – let Salgado show you how the veterans do it. Like those Viagra ads say: There's nothing like experience.

Curtis Salgado plays 5 pm Friday, May 4, at Skip's Records & CD World; FREE; and 8 pm Friday, May 4, at WOW Hall; \$20 adv., \$25 door. – *William Kennedy*



PHOTO BY DILLON DONOVAN



DIY Grass Widows

San Francisco's **Grass Widow** is a lovely mess. At first listen, skittery drums underscore rumbling bass lines. Wiry guitars entwine with angelic female harmonies that make sense in that universe ruled by the B-52s. And ultimately it feels like it's all going in different directions, functioning with its own internal logic "like outsider art," says Grass Widower Hannah Lew.

On second listen, the disparate elements start to snap into focus. There's some vintage surf-rock and girl-group sounds in *Grass Widow*, along with some arty post-punk experimentation (think Joy Division, or The Fall). Like fellow garage-rock/girl-group revivalists Vivian Girls and Best Coast (but minus the warm fuzz those bands utilize), *Grass Widow* breaks rock 'n' roll down to its DIY elements – which is pretty punk rock.

"We're all equally dedicated to the band," says Lew, who also mentions that the band members gather inspiration from one another rather than outside influences. She says the three-piece is definitely inspired by the punk-rock ethos. She says she likes to feel "this person had to make those sounds" when listening to music, and to be reminded that "anyone can do it ... Which is a nice thing to hear," she adds.

Grass Widow toured with Wild Flag after opening on the *Portlandia* live tour and appearing in a *Portlandia* skit. In May the group releases *Internal Logic* (all puns intended) on its own label HLR Records.

Grass Widow plays 7:45 pm Saturday, May 5, at the Willamette Valley Music Fest on campus; FREE. – *William Kennedy*