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SLOW 'N' STEADY

A pair of modern folk artists, one looking forward and the other back, plays Hi-Fi Lounge

Syrian-American Azniv Korkejian's self-titled debut, released under the moniker **Bedouine**, is an effortlessly elegant collection of country-tinged folk-pop recalling midnight-blue classics from Leonard Cohen, Nick Drake or Joni Mitchell.

Korkejian's dusky alto sits atop immaculate acoustic arrangements with occasional horns, strings and oboe. Her vocal phrasing is immaculate and her poetry is simple but arresting. "California city parks/ They talk in exclamation marks," she sings on album track "Back to You." Throughout, Korkejian is interested in stories of independence and self-awareness, frequently expressed by water metaphors.

From "Solitary Daughter," she hums low: "I'm not an island/ I'm a body of water." And while she didn't have a clear message in mind while writing the song — "It just came pouring out of me," she says — looking back, Korkejian agrees that the couplet is her response to the old saying: "No man is an island."

So, in this context, what does it mean to be a body of water? "What it means is I'm self-sufficient," she says, "but I'm capable of connectivity — and want that connectivity."

But Korkejian says the recording project started simply as a "passion project" among herself and her collaborators — it wasn't clear when or if the songs would see the light of day. She'd been carrying the music with her for some time, and didn't think of herself as a recording artist. It's a startling thought that songs of such grace and beauty could go unheard.

"I didn't really know what to expect," Korkejian says. But one thing she did know: She wanted to work with analog tape, and in retrospect she feels this flavored the music. "I think that had a lot to do with that atmosphere," Korkejian says. "I think tape colors the negative space."

And this approach to the recording process even affected her performance. Working with tape, Korkejian says, "encourages me to be gentle, deliberate ... It was really, really slow and steady, coming to the realization it would get released at all."

Performing in Eugene alongside Bedouine is **Willie Watson**, formerly of **Old Crow Medicine Show**. Watson's latest release, *Folksinger Vol. 2*, revives the notion of the folk-singer as an interpreter of song, a conduit for traditional music from ages passed.

And with tunes like "Samson & Delilah," featuring classic gospel group The Fairfield Four, Watson snarls and picks with the heat and thrust of a young Dylan, Phil Ochs or Dave Van Ronk.

Watson says the songs on his latest release simply spoke to him. "I'm intrigued by those old stories," Watson says. "Intrigued by an older way of life. You learn about how old these stories are. It's fascinating."

"I just look for songs I can take and do myself," he continues. "These old folk songs, I can't sing every one of them that I want to. I just do what's gonna be fun."

Bedouine and Willie Watson play 8 pm Monday, Sept. 18, at Hi-Fi Lounge; \$12 advance, \$15 door, 21-Plus.

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