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WITH SPECIAL GUEST
6 LOVE & SPECIAL SAUCE

FRI MAR 22 7:00PM DRS
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Dave Mason & Steve Cropper
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We Had Dreams, Dear Mr. Fantasy,
Feelin' Alright, Only You Know And I Know

Founding Member of:
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In The Midnight Hour, The Dock Of The Bay

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Reserved Seating

STEEL PULSE MCDONALD THEATRE
7PM DOORS • 8PM SHOW

FRI APR 05 7:00PM DRS
8:00PM SHW

SWITCHFOOT
THE NATIVE TOUR
TONGUE

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS
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TUE APR 09 6:30PM DRS
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music

Charming Disaster
Saturday, March 23 • 7:30 pm
Brew Station, Cottage Grove
all ages until 8:30 • Free

The Disaster Twins

PHOTO BY SHERVIN LAINEZ

BROOKLYN-BASED FOLK-NOIR DUO PLAYS COTTAGE GROVE

By Will Kennedy

The Brew Station & Coast Fork Feed in Cottage Grove features beer, food, animal feed and live music. If there was ever a more “you know you’re in Oregon when” kind of combo, I don’t know what that would be.

“Hopefully people will feel comfortable enough to bring their horse,” says Jeff Morris, half of the Brooklyn-based Gothic cabaret folk-noir duo **Charming Disaster**.

In fact, Charming Disaster may just add animal feed to their tour rider, Ellia Bisker jokes.

The duo is touring the Northwest in advance of their new album, **SPELLS + RITUALS**, out this June.

This will be Charming Disaster’s third album, and each song is like a spell or ritual inspired by folklore and mythology, as well as true crime and books, I’m told. The pair lists Edward Gorey, Tim Burton, Raymond Chandler and the murder ballads of the Americana tradition as influences.

“Each song is its own little narrative,” Bisker says, with a little of the deadpan acoustic punk of Jonathan Richman, as well as the arch theatricality of Amanda Palmer.

Album-track “Baba Yaga” has the galloping backbeat of classic country, Bisker whoopin’ and hollerin’ like a cowhand driving the cattle home.

Elsewhere, the Sondheim-esque “Belladonna Melodrama,” has Bisker and Morris singing a tale of poisoned daggers, lovers escaping to sea under cover of darkness, and avenging the good name of an unjustly killed father. It’s dark but also campy stuff, careful to never take itself too seriously.

“I think I was raised to have a macabre sense of humor,” Bisker says. “I love the Addams Family. I was destined for this from the very beginning. Humor is the only way to deal with mortality. How else can you deal with these things? They’re realities.”

“That grin is just the skull looking back at you,” Morris says, adding that without that sense of humor, Charming Disaster would just be goth-emo. “But that’s not our aesthetic.”

Bisker and Morris say their songwriting is a collaborative process that’s evolved a lot over the years. These days, one musician brings the other a seed of a song, according to Bisker.

“It’s very exciting to have a collaborator that will come to you and say, ‘I have this idea,’” she says. And this collaborative process works because of an implicit trust between the songwriters.

Morris says: “I feel very comfortable showing Ellia all these ugly bumps.”

He adds that they make each other mixed tapes, talk about books and attend art exhibits.

“We do a lot to cultivate that mind meld,” he continues. “We spend so much time together touring.”

SPELLS+RITUALS isn’t even quite out yet, and the duo is already working on new music.

“We’re pretty prolific,” Bisker says. “We’re working on a couple new songs right now.”

One new song is about falling asleep in the snow, something you’re warned never to do.

“It would be fun to have a Charming Disaster song about falling asleep in the snow,” Bisker says. ■