

# 'Spring Sting'

Holiday Friends usher in the season with new EP

Most bands begin recording themselves at home before graduating to proper studios. Holiday Friends did the opposite.

After the release of 2014's "Major Magic," the upbeat, unabashedly poppy Astoria indie foursome figured they would release a string of singles, and Holiday Friends decamped to a studio in Portland.

"We got a really good sounding recording and just sat on it forever," says guitarist, singer and songwriter Scott Fagerland. "During that time I was going friggin' stir crazy."

Fagerland started recording on his laptop and phone. Despite the pin-hole-sized microphones, he was pleasantly surprised by the results — enough to send them to Kevin Robinson, a Portland-based musician who produced and mixed "Major Magic."

Robinson, of the acclaimed but now defunct Viva Voce, liked what he heard and added his engineering flourishes. "He mixed it, and it was like night and day," says Scott. "He made it sound awesome." When the band concurred, Holiday Friends' approach shifted accordingly: They would record themselves.

In an Astoria hilltop basement they amassed more professional equipment and techniques. The house belongs to Scott's brother Jon Fagerland — the band's jack-of-all-trades utility player. There, Holiday Friends recorded the majority of the just-released "SpringSting" EP. Its fidelity is every bit as crisp, sparkling and robust as the professionally recorded "Major Magic."

"The ('SpringSting') EP was a direct result of an obsession with the '80s," Scott says. "That's why there are songs that sound like the '80s, and that's why there are '80s covers."

The "SpringSting" title plays on one of



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Astoria indie band Holiday Friends will perform at the Astoria Armory on Thursday, March 31 in honor of their sophomore EP, "SpringSting," which was released March 16.

those covers: Bruce Springsteen's "Tougher Than The Rest." Also included alongside two originals is "Your Love," by The Outfield, and a recent hit: Justin Bieber's "What Do You Mean?" The re-workings, each twinkling, spacious, bright and soaring, glide smoothly into Holiday Friends' glossy, arena-sized, synth-pop oeuvre.

The group is celebrating the release with a 17-date, West Coast tour that includes multiple appearances at the Treefort Music Fest in Boise, Idaho. Holiday Friends will play the Astoria Armory on March 31. It's a date they have circled.

"Astoria definitely feels like our hometown," Scott says. "All of our friends are here ... It feels like the majority of our fans are in Portland. But this is our home."

"There is an incredible sense of community in this town, and it's hard to find other places," says bassist

Zack O'Connor.

"In Astoria I consider anyone who might be a fan a friend," Scott adds.

A year-and-a-half since releasing "Major Magic" and reinventing their recording

process, Holiday Friends are anxious to get onstage.

"I just feel like it's been such a long, arduous journey and we're finally getting to go on this long of a tour," Scott says. "It's just starting to feel more natural. It's easier to feel like a part of our lives."

"I feel like there's a point, regardless of how successful the record is going to be, I'm confident in single shows being successful," says Jon.

But it's about more than generating fans. "It just sounds like fun," says Jon. "I'm never going to convince myself to spend three or four weeks driving around the states and stopping at clubs if I'm not in a band."

Once they return, it's back to the basement.

SPRING  
STING



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Holiday Friends' sophomore EP "SpringSting" is an album full of '80s pop-rock throwback sounds.

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