

Vinyl release party by mystery musician

NEHALEM — A record release party for the album “The Blue Dirt of Paradise” takes place 7 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 22, at the North County Recreation District Performing Arts Center in Nehalem.

Dusty Santamaria + Moira Ichiban and Galen Ballinger will deliver live performances. There is a \$5 suggested donation.

The record arrives credited to no one.

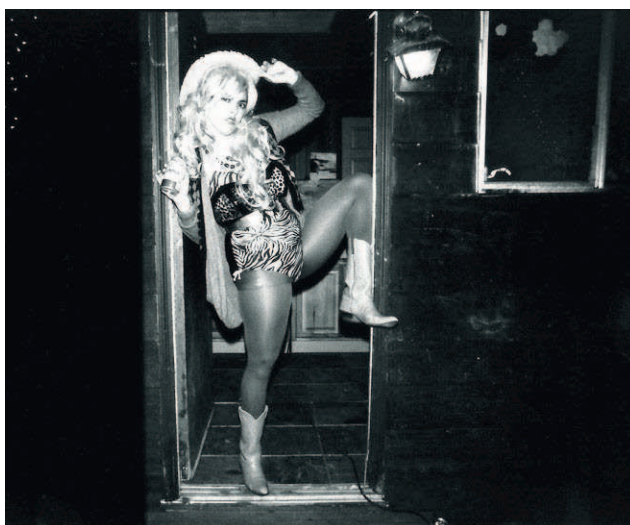
The cover, a stark black-and-white photo, was taken at night. A woman in ripped nylons with blonde curls spilling from a cheap straw cowboy hat wears a tight-fitting, wildly patterned bodysuit. With a can of Hamm’s beer in her hand and a scowl on her face, she stands legs akimbo, spread across an open doorway. At once beckoning and forbidding, she’s an invitation and a warning.

“The Blue Dirt of Paradise” opens with a tale of heartbreak and perseverance. The sound, structure and subject are classic country, adorned as much of the record is: with plinking bar room pianos, twangy Telecaster licks, shimmering pedal steel and lilting fiddles.

Every component of the record is adroitly but understatedly performed. While never rushed, the pace occasionally quickens into heel-clicking honky tonk and chugging boogie-woogie, though an aching ballad is never far.

Although the singer — he of the plaintive baritone and wistful poetry — remains anonymous, we do glimpse his trials. He may be in paradise, as the record’s title suggests.

But this may also be



‘The Blue Dirt of Paradise’ album cover.

purgatory.

Either way, “The Blue Dirt of Paradise” is picturesque. The vinyl record takes you there.

It’s a world where everything’s dusty, where the ashtrays are full and the bottles are empty. A place of wide-open skies and a glaring sun affords no shade till it sets. It’s a place where beauty is found but often in the last place you look. Where toil is common and clarity comes with a hangover. Where respite is a truck stop but the road never ends. It’s a place where companionship is plentiful, but nothing — especially love — comes without a price.

The nameless narrator surveys and recounts this world — could it be Texas? Mexico? A dream? — in vivid detail and reflects with longing, desire, respect and resignation.

“You shoulda known better,” he sings, “but you knew enough to know you had to dive in.”

With such insight, “The Blue Dirt of Paradise” belongs in the canon of existential country, along-

side tunes like Jimmy Webb’s “Wichita Lineman” and Kris Kristofferson’s “Sunday Morning Coming Down.” (Made famous by Glen Campbell and Johnny Cash, respectively.)

As for the identity of the artist behind “The Blue Dirt of Paradise” — who’s taking the unprecedented step of convening a record release party where other artists will perform without him — well, maybe it doesn’t matter. Maybe the mystery is freeing, a way for listeners to sink further into the record’s sense of place.

As another existential country tune, by Iris DeMent, goes: “Let The Mystery Be.”



COURTESY SEASIDE MUSEUM

The construction of the jetties at the mouth of the Columbia took more than 50 years.

History & Hops tells a rock-solid story

SEASIDE — The story of the construction of the North and South jetties — a story of pile drivers and railroad cars, of tugs and barges, of locomotives and shipwreck — will be recounted at Seaside Museum’s monthly History & Hops at Seaside Brewing Co., 861 Broadway St.

Gary Kobes, on expert on the jetties, presents “Rails in the Surf: Reshaping the Mouth of the Columbia River,” 6 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 27.

The immense structures that define the mouth of the Columbia River took more than 50 years to build with the best turn-of-the-century technology. For the North Jetty, alone, steamships and locomotives moved and placed more than 3 million tons of stone. Their construction has had a profound effect on the people and

landscape of our region.

Kobes, a Chinook resident, is manager of the Astoria Regional Airport and volunteers on the boards of the Columbia River Maritime Museum and the Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum in Ilwaco.

History & Hops is a series of local history discussions hosted by the Seaside Museum on the last Thursday of each month, September through May.

’Tis the chilling sound of doom

ASTORIA — Enjoy a night of heavy metal at the Labor Temple Bar, 10 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 22, with Portland band Where Lovers Rot and local band Thrashbilly as the opener. Cover is \$5.

Where Lovers Rot, formed in 2013, is a doom metal band voiced by classical female lead Sara Fallico. The music is moody and dark, with lyrics and vocals that are ethereal and “waft operatic spells atop a landscape of haunting keys and mournful melodies.”

The Labor Temple is at 934 Duane St.



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