

An ear for the environment

New album connects poetry with guitar

BY ALYSSA EVANS

It all started in 2002 when author Robert Michael Pyle turned his radio on to listen to a local station.

What he heard was a Friday night show curated by Krist Novoselic, a founding member of Nirvana, for Coast Community Radio. That evening, Novoselic played a variety of vinyl records.

But one part of the show stood out to Pyle in particular. During his show, Novoselic read a piece from poet Walt Whitman alongside a guitar piece by John Fahey, a well-known slide guitar player.

Pyle was hooked.

The connection

Later, when Pyle and Novoselic met in person, Pyle suggested the two collaborate.

Pyle wanted to create something similar to the poetry and guitar combination Novoselic had broadcasted.

“Soon, we had a song about a tsunami and others about a lahar, geology and birds. Those kinds of things,” Novoselic said. “And then it got to a point where we had 11 songs.”

Pyle and Novoselic had created the music for what would later become their album “Butterfly Launches from Spar Pole.”

Ray Prestegard, who Novoselic plays with in the band Giants

in the Trees, joined the duo a few years ago. All three are featured on the album.

“Ray can play just about any music under the sun,” Pyle said. “He helped us with writing and coming up with more string parts.”

Butterfly Launches from Spar Pole



The cover of ‘Butterfly Launches from Spar Pole’ features silkscreen and butterfly prints from prospective book covers made by album contributor Robert Michael Pyle’s late wife Thea Linnaea Pyle.

The album features poems written and curated by Pyle, alongside instrumental songs written by Novoselic. Much of the songs’ instrumental parts are inspired by Fahey, Novoselic said.

“I play finger-style guitar as much as

possible,” Novoselic said. “That kind of style of Americana is really abstract.”

In each song, Pyle reads the lyrics while Novoselic and Prestegard play instruments such as guitars, mandolin, violin and piano.

“In other collaborations where poets

are working with musicians, the music is often jazz, and in the background,” Pyle said. “That is not the case here at all. These are songs. They’re lyrics, I just recite them

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