

Small Souls, big questions

It quickly becomes apparent while listening to the opening track on Small Souls’ self-titled debut record that the band is concerned with issues of faith and spirituality. Each verse in “Please Don’t Give Me What I Want” by singer-songwriter Brian Rozendal depicts characters in the depths of despair, through suicide and lethal drug abuse, issuing silent prayers to have their actions reversed.

Midway through the album, the issue of losing one’s religion comes to the foreground in “How Great Thou Art.” Borrowing its title from the seminal Christian hymn, the song explores one’s faith gradually eroding as they grow older, and how the singing of the hymn loses its meaning.

Aside from the two aforementioned songs, the album is peppered with bits of Judeo-Christian imagery.

“Because I grew up deeply religious,” said Rozendal, “it makes sense that I would pull from Christianity’s imagery and values. I’ve tried to use God and the Devil and religious ideas as metaphors, a way of externalizing internal conflict.”

The spiritual thread stitched into Rozendal’s work can be traced back through to the unlikely beginnings of his musical career: as a dancer in a Christian rap group, the King’s Valley Crew, or KVC for short. He was only in seventh grade and had just moved back to California from New Jersey when he received the invitation from one of his closest friends to join. Eventually he moved into composing lyrics for the group before learning guitar and joining a Christian punk band, Childsize.

Rozendal’s life significantly changed in 2003 when he left his church and moved to Portland. There he joined a series of rock



Photos contributed by Small Souls



J.D. KINDLE
Comment

bands for which he wrote his own material. Rozendal eventually took to writing more intimate, acoustic material, which led to the release of his solo album “Lean” and meeting fellow folk-rock musicians within Portland.

Rozendal made another attempt at a rock band, this time simply known as Rozendal, featuring drummer Adam Mack and multi-instrumentalist Bryan Daste. When Rozendal split up, Brian returned to composing acoustic folk material, but continued his relationship with Daste.

Daste, primarily a pedal steel guitar player best known as a member of Portland alt-country group Scotland Barr & The Slow Drags, adds a variety of sonic textures to Rozendal’s songs, be it on pedal steel, banjo, mandolin, or the musical saw.

Of his musical partner Rozendal says, “Small Souls doesn’t exist without Bryan Daste. Otherwise, it’s just another guy with an acoustic guitar, playing singer-songwriter tunes. Bryan’s arrangements are what make the songs special. Our collaboration makes the whole process so rewarding and elevates

the songs into something I find much more compelling.”

Though Small Souls’ debut album, slightly more than three years old now, falls firmly in folk-rock territory, the group’s sound is morphing into what is best described as “experimental Americana.” Citing as inspiration the method the band Wilco took in composing and recording their landmark album “Yankee Hotel Foxtrot,” Rozendal describes being dissatisfied with the straight arrangements of his songs and the desire to take a more thoughtful approach in their arranging.

“We wanted something fresh that didn’t sound the same from one song to the next,” says Rozendal of the new material. “So Bryan and I spent a year demoing all the new material, and trying different approaches: slowing them down, speeding them up, adding drum machine tracks, messing with the vocals, electric guitar, synth, etc. The songs are still Americana at the core, but now they’ve got these other elements supporting them or taking them in new

directions.” Because the band spent so much time experimenting with arrangements they have prepared a full album’s worth of material to be recorded at Daste’s studio, Magic Closet, in June. Until then, audiences can catch a glimpse of Small Souls’ new sonic approach in their live performances, which will be augmented by their tour opener, Alaskan keyboardist and singer Kat Moore.

“We are very excited to get this new material out,” says Rozendal. “It’s much darker than the last album because I was writing from a difficult place. In some ways, the songs are unforgiving, but we felt it was important to keep the music honest. This album will be more artistically ambitious for us, so of course we’re excited and proud to get it out there.”

Small Souls perform at the Great Pacific on Monday, March 21.

J.D. Kindle is a Pendleton musician and the executive director of the Oregon East Symphony.

BRIEFLY

Wanderlust Circus comes to Walla Walla

WALLA WALLA — Part circus and part Bohemian vaudeville, Wanderlust Circus will perform a pair of shows at the Power House Theater, 111 N. Sixth St., Walla Walla.

A theatrical troupe based in Portland, the animal-free circus group features a 10-piece swing band, acrobats, aerialists, a trick-roping cowboy clown, contortionists, hand balancers, jugglers and dancers.

A family-friendly show featuring acrobats, aerialists, jugglers and live orchestra is Tuesday, April 5 at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$7 for youths.

Designed for audiences 18 and older, a cabaret-style show, which includes a burlesque act, is Wednesday, April 6 at 7 p.m. at the Power House Theater, 111 N. Sixth St., Walla Walla. Tickets are \$30 per person.

For more information or to reserve tickets, call 509-529-6500 or visit www.phtww.com.

Portland duo returns for all-ages show

PENDLETON — A husband and wife duo familiar to Pendleton returns for an all-ages show featuring their unique brand of pop with intricate, world music-influenced arrangements.

There Is No Mountain will play Thursday, March 24 at 7 p.m. at Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., 403 S. Main St., Pendleton. There is no cover charge.

The musical influences of Matt Harmon and Kali Giaritta of Portland includes genres ranging from jazz to folk, classical to psychedelic rock, and world music to doom metal.

For more about There Is No Mountain, visit www.thereisnomountain.com.

WHAT TO DO

Festivals

A Wee Bit O’Ireland

•March 17-20
•Heppner
www.heppnerchamber.com
Free. The festival celebrates the Irish heritage in the area with food, fun and entertainment. And, those with the luck of the Irish might win one of two \$100 Pot O’Gold drawings held during the celebration.

Wooden Shoe Tulip Festival

•March 18-May 1; 9 a.m.-6 p.m.
•33814 S.Meridian Road, Woodburn
www.woodenshoe.com
\$5/person or \$20/carload. Stroll through 40 acres of colorful flowers. Bring a picnic lunch or purchase food onsite. Catch a ride on the cow trains or enjoy daily wine tasting available from the Wooden Shoe Vineyards. View the website for the current field report and special weekend events.

Art & Museums

Ideograms: Works on Paper

•Monday-Thursdays; 10 a.m.-8 p.m.
•Friday-Saturdays; 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
•Pendleton Public Library, 502 S.W. Dorion Ave.
Free. Exhibit by Pendleton artist Andrew Sykes.

Explore Evolution

•Monday - Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
•Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino.
www.tamastslitk.org
\$10/adults, \$9/senior citizens, \$6/youths, free/5 and under or \$25/family of four. The exhibit features the work of scientists who are making leading discoveries about the evolution of life. The interactive displays provide visitors with an opportunity to experience how scientists conduct research on evolution. Runs through May 28.

Debbie McIntosh

•Monday-Fridays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
•Saturdays; 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
•Pendleton Art + Frame, 36 S.W. Court Ave.
Free. An exhibit featuring the Pendleton photographer’s images will be on display and for sale through the end of April.

“Oregon’s Botanical Landscape: An Opportunity to Imagine Oregon Before 1800

•Tuesday-Fridays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.,
•Saturdays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
•Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.
www.pendletonarts.org
Free. Frances Stilwell, a retired biophysicist and ethologist, shares her passion of native plants with pen and pastel artwork. Runs through March 26.

Heritage Station Museum

•Tuesday-Saturdays
•10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
•108 S.W. Frazer Ave., Pendleton
www.heritagestationmuseum.org
\$5/adults, \$2/student, \$4/seniors, \$10/family.

SAGE Center

•Monday-Saturdays
•10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
•101 Olson Road, Boardman
www.visitsage.com
\$5/adults, \$3/students, seniors, free/under 5. An interactive visitor center highlighting sustainable agriculture and energy. On-site store features local art, jewelry, food, wine and gifts.

Round-Up Happy Canyon

Hall of Fame

•Monday-Saturdays
•10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
•1114 S.W. Court Ave., Pendleton
\$5/adults, \$4/seniors, \$2/ages 10 and under. Museum preserves history of the Pendleton Round-Up and Happy Canyon.

Wine & Design Paint Nite

•Mondays; 7 p.m.
•Mac’s Bar & Grill, 1400 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton
\$20. 21-and-older. Participants follow instructions to create unique masterpieces. Mac’s provides canvas, paints, easels, brushes, aprons and a lively atmosphere with music. Reservations required. (541-276-5531).

Art Class with a Wine Glass

•Wednesday, March 30; 5:30 p.m.
•River Lodge & Grill, 6 Marine Drive, Boardman
\$30. Learn to paint in a relaxed atmosphere. Fee includes canvas and paints; drinks and appetizers available for purchase. (Reserve by call 541-481-6800).

Pepsi Primetime@ the Museum

•Saturday, April 9; 1-4 p.m.
•Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino.
Free. Features the Evolution Game Zone with stations set up for visitors to challenge their gaming skills and knowledge of science. Held in conjunction with current exhibit, Explore Evolution. Complimentary refreshments served.

Music

Jones and Fischer

•Saturday, March 19, 8 p.m. No cover
•Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission.

Small Souls

•Monday, March 21; 7 p.m. All ages. No cover.
•Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., 403 S. Main St., Pendleton

There is No Mountain

•Thursday, March 24; 7 p.m. All ages. No cover.
•Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., 403 S. Main St., Pendleton.

Nuketown

•Friday, March 25; Saturday, March 26, 8 p.m. No cover
•Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission.

Walla Walla Guitar Festival

•April 8-10
•Walla Walla Elks Lodge, 15 E. Main St.
\$20-\$105. Features Sacramento-based rocking blues masters Rick Estrin & The Nightcats, touring in support of their latest CD, “Your Asked For It...Live” Saturday at 6:40 p.m. View website for complete festival lineup, which also includes performances at the Power House Theater, Sapopili Cellars, The Marcus Whitman, VFW Post 992 and more.

Michael Martin Murphey

•Saturday, April 9; 7 p.m. (doors open at 6 p.m.)
•Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton
\$45/premium, \$40/general. Michael Martin Murphey and his Rio Grande Band perform a benefit concert for Andy Rieber, who has chronic Lyme disease.

Night life

St. Patrick’s Party

•Saturday, March 19; 9 p.m.
•Sub Zero Restaurant & Lounge, 100 W. Highway 730, Irrigon
No cover. Karaoke contest features cash prizes. Scavenger hunt, games, prizes, raffles, singing and dancing.

Whiskey Wednesday Game Night

•Wednesdays; 3-7 p.m.
•The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

No cover. Drink specials, Xbox 360, Nintendo Wii, PlayStation 3 and Nintendo 64.

Thursday Night Comedy

•Thursdays, 8 p.m.
•Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission.

No cover. March 24: Chris Simpson & Danny Cruz; March 31: Darryl Rhoades

Open Mic

•First/third Friday each month, 8 p.m.-midnight
•The Packard Tavern, 118 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

Karaoke

•Fridays 8 p.m. (9 p.m. if game on)
•Riverside Sports Bar, 1501 Sixth St., Umatilla

Theater, stage & film

“Rumpelstiltskin” auditions

•Monday, March 21; 10 a.m.
•Windy River Elementary School, 500 Tatone St., Boardman
Missoula Children’s Theatre production seeks Morrow County youths to perform. Rehearsals continue through the week with free performances set for Saturday, March 26 at 3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

“An Evening of One-Act Plays” auditions

•Wednesday, March 30 & Thursday, March 31; 7 p.m.
•BMCC, Bob Clapp Theatre, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton
College Community Theatre seeks more than 15 adults for seven on-act plays to be presented May 12-15 and 19-22. No advance preparation is required for the auditions. Selections from the plays will be used for cold readings.

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