



Side A/Contributed photo

Melissa Ruth and Johnny Leal are the Midnight Darlins. They play at 7:30 p.m. Friday, July 8, for the Side A-lley concert at Side A Brewing in La Grande.

SIDE A-LLEY CONCERTS

Side A-lley concerts are held most weeks at Side A Brewing, 1219 Washington Ave. in La Grande. For updates, visit the Facebook page or sideabeer.com.

SCHEDULE

July 8: Midnight Darlins
July 15: Alka Mahdi
July 23: Sage & Stone
July 30: Jezebel's Mother
Aug. 6: Chris Baron & the Two Secrets
Aug. 12: Calico Bones
Aug. 20: Megan Alder
Aug. 26: Wes Youssi & the County Champs

Side A-lley concert welcomes the Midnight Darlins

By John Vollinger

Go! Magazine

LA GRANDE — Side A Brewing continues the Side A-lley concert series with the Midnight Darlins on Friday, July 8, 7:30 p.m.

The concert is on the back patio of the brewpub, 1219 Washington Ave.

The "Darlins" will bring to La Grande a genre self-described as "Doo-Wop Twang: The space of blues, the teeth of country and the grit of rock n roll."

The band is led by frontwoman Melissa Ruth — lead vocalist and guitar-player with a voice that can often alternate between being soft, and being rugged and spirited — and accompanied by her husband, Johnny Leal,

on blues guitar. Together, they craft a soulful, bluesy approach to themes such as togetherness and solitude, and immortality and transience, using a blend of imagery that ranges from the cosmic, to the gritty details of the reality of daily life.

This enmeshing of such a range of ideas and images is complemented by the style the "Darlins" bring to their approach to music. They describe the feel of their music as owing "as much for the space between the notes as the notes themselves...music that is as sparse as it is interconnected, reflecting the rural Oregon countryside that they call home. We see that it is not only the lyrics that benefit from the

slow, spacious, but vibrant life in rural America, but the music itself; the beauty in the openness that gives us all a bit of space to breathe."

This has been a consistent theme for Ruth — she was, she said, "Born and raised in rural British Columbia on a balanced diet of borscht and Bob Dylan" and the soulful simplicity of these ingredients of her upbringing shine through in her music.

If curious, one should check out "Melissa Ruth — Wake Me In the Morning" on YouTube. On this acoustic track, Ruth sings, "While the songbirds are still singing, before they take their flight... Please don't tell me where you're going...Just be sure to wake me

when you go," soulfully describing this tension between the realization that things are fleeting, but not dwelling on that enough to miss the beauty in the moments.

However, there will surely be many songs for patrons to dance to; for a sample of this, be sure to check out "Melissa Ruth — Long Haul Heartbreak." While not limited to these two sounds, you can certainly get a solid feel of what to expect on Friday.

For more information on the band, and some more samples of their music, head to melissaruthmusic.com. For more on the Side A-lley series, visit sideabeer.com or check the Facebook page for Side A Brewing.