

Cream-

colored slumbers

Mission Creek 2008: Foxtails Brigade float beyond experimental folk

By Kat Renz

Thank you, Brian Martinez. Were it not for this mutual friend, guitarist-vocalist Laura Weinbach and violinist Sivan Sadeh may have never met, and Foxtails Brigade perhaps best but weakly described as experimental folk may never have formed. And the two 25-year-old, classically trained musicians would miss the synergy they possess playing à deux. As Weinbach raved over the phone while the pair drove around San Francisco: "What's really cool about violin and Sivan in particular is it's really like having two to three vocal lines. She totally harmonizes with me, melodically, through the violin. Every song she's been a part of becomes 100 times better."

The duo met last September and immediately began performing: they've already logged about 35 shows, entertaining everyone from sweet old folks in Santa Barbara convalescent homes to Weinbach's surrogate high school students (she's a substitute teacher). Sadeh's rocked the violin nearly her entire life, playing in ensembles as diverse as mariachi to garage, while Weinbach studied creative writing and music at the University of California, Santa Cruz, which is obvious in both her seemingly effortless classical fingerpicking and her lyrical storytelling.



Chocolate milk and hungry flies

"Porcelain" is how their friend Uni, the one with the ukulele, dubs their unmatched sound. She's right: the pretty melodies and flower-strewn stories conjure memories of playing dress-up in vintage finery. Yet a sharp, almost violent edge is ever-present, saving the music from sugary-sweet, indie-folk doldrums. Foxtails' consistent intensity and experimental theatrics think Faun Fables, an oft-cited influence are largely due to the tension created by Sadeh. Her violin melodies dance around Weinbach's vocal ones, taunting and tiptoeing, until they collide at each song's climax, an act that often is as beautifully dissonant as it is gracious. "I like to screech on my violin when I have a chance, and get that kind of whiny sound that people really don't want to listen to but are attracted to for some reason," Sadeh said, adding that she's learning to play the similarly eerie-sounding saw.

Weinbach's lyrics never fail on the storytelling front, whether she's channeling a scary doll that comes alive in the dark of night or writing about a psychotic student. In the latter song, "For Leo," she sings, "But I have known your kind before / You're linked by paper cuts and sores / Rotten green banana eyes / With chocolate milk and hungry flies." Creepy yet compelling, Foxtails dare you to turn away.

FOXTAILS BRIGADE

July 20, 8 p.m., call for price

Knockout

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