

Harmony key for Calgary folk collective

Magnolia Buckskin thrives on solo and group musical directions



MIKE BELL

"Are you trying to get me fired?" asks Emily Triggs with a bright laugh.

No. That's actually the furthest thing from the point of the exercise she's been tasked with.

We're sitting in Wild Rose Brewery and the singer-songwriter has been asked to evaluate her co-workers or, rather, her bandmates in local folk quartet Magnolia Buckskin.

They are, she's said on numerous occasions during the conversation, four very different people, four very different musicians with four separate and accomplished musical careers who have, somehow and in some way, been together for six years now and found a successful formula for working together.

So. How?

They found harmony. Literally. Which led to figuratively.

"We just knew there was something there. It was the harmonies, basically. That doesn't always happen. So that's how we knew," says Triggs of the original connection between herself, Natasha Platt, Kathy Cook and, at that time, Marti Smith, who soon after left the group to pursue a family, and was replaced somewhat seamlessly by Corry Ulan.

And, again, those relationships have flowered and blossomed as Magnolia Buckskin continued on, built a reputation and a following that can fill any room from the many city's folk clubs to the Ironwood, where they'll perform Saturday night.

That particular show will not only demonstrate, again, what a

SPOTLIGHT

Magnolia Buckskin release
Die Laughing with a show
Saturday night at the Ironwood.
To reserve a seat call 403-269-5581.

cohesive and wonderful collective they are — with those honey-kissed harmonies and pretty, pretty roots songs — but is also a testament to how fruitful the relationship is. It will be the celebration of the release of their second full-length album *Die Laughing*, which was recorded with producer Lorrie Matheson at his Arch Audio studio over the past few years.

The 12-song charmer features three tracks each credited to the four different songwriters, with all of them getting the full treatment by all of the multi-instrumentalists, all of their gorgeous voices.

But Triggs is quick to point out that despite what the credit may say, each tune on the disc — and every one that they perform — has gone through a process known, perilously for the tongue-tied, as "Magbuckifying."

It's a process that sees the writer of said tune bring it to her three sisters who all offer their input, their own unique musical perspective, with Triggs explaining that: Her background growing up in Quebec is one of old country and rock 'n' roll; the Carstairs native Platt has more of a pop sensibility; Ontarioite Ulan falls on the Celtic folk side; and Saskabusher Cook has a traditional folk past, which saw her previously plying her trade with James Keelaghan.

Ultimately, should there be a disagreement when it comes to the song, the author is given the final say.

"We're a collaborative effort," Triggs reiterates. "There's nobody that leads it, we're all equal."



Calgary folk act Magnolia Buckskin is made up of Natasha Platt, left, Kathy Cook, Emily Triggs and Corry Ulan. FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

And they're all committed to Magnolia Buckskin Triggs says, noting that they rehearse at least once a week, and gig anywhere between once a month, to three or four times a week.

"We're dedicated to it. We all have side projects that we do, because everyone in the band is accomplished and working on other things, but we're dedicated to this band. We enjoy it."

Which is why Triggs has no problem shifting the focus from her back to Magnolia Buckskin's latest project so soon after the late November release of her own, wonderful album *When Guinevere Went In*.

"The great thing about it is the girls are so supportive that it makes it really easy to do both of them," she says of her solo and group activities.

"Of course, for right now, we're putting an album out and I'm invested in it because we all

worked hard on it and I love playing with them ...

"I don't feel they hinder each other, I think it supports it. It helps Magnolia Buckskin when I'm doing my solo project and vice versa, because it's just more music getting out there."

Besides, she says, one of the byproducts of the band having played together for so long is that they know each other remarkably well, have become so comfortable with one another, and are now letting more of themselves into their songwriting for Magnolia Buckskin, as evidenced by *Die Laughing*.

"There is a cohesiveness because there are the harmonies and there are the same kinds of instrumentation but you can definitely hear the differences in people's personalities coming out."

Which brings us back to that initial request, the one for Triggs

to analyze and assess each of her bandmates, to come up with a quick and easy psychological profile for them all, including herself.

She finally relents: Platt, she thinks, is the "risk-taker" of the four, as evidenced by her newest hobby as "roller derby girl"; Ulan is the quiet and thoughtful member; and Cook is the wise and experienced one of the bunch.

And herself? Triggs tags herself as the more practical one of the group, the planner, the logical one who had to think twice about pigeonholing each of her friends for publication purposes, while still being able to acknowledge how dissimilar they are.

"It's good to have different characters," she says before adding one caveat that can overcome any difference.

"But we're all funny, we're all hilarious."

And harmonious, too.
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