

STATE & LOCAL

Local Beat: The Tender Fruit

Ashleigh Phillips, Staff Writer

Christy Smith came from small town, Rocky Mount to the Triangle to study literature and she did. But she also began to play guitar and when she sang, a voice tinged by the records of her grandfather came floating out. And so begins Smith's story, that she tells me like an old friend. Over our phone interview her southern accent is comforting and it's easy to understand how it smoothly translated over into Nola, an alt-country band that played its last show in 2007. In addition to breaking up with her boyfriend, Justin Vernon of Bon Iver, Smith was left with nothing but songs. But it was those songs that would slowly morph over the next four years into The Tender Fruit. With some help from the creative forces of Phil Cook of Megafaun, and Vernon, Smith released The Tender Fruit's first LP, "Flotsam and Krill" this year.

A first listen of "Flotsam and Krill" delivers a clear charming vocal that sounds like home no matter where you are from. Smith's voice waltzes with deep drum beats and haunting guitar lines, but simple chords keep the mood delighted rather than muddled. It's gospel. It's mountain music. It's punk rock. It's indie folk. It's effective. Effective because Smith knows what it's like to fall in and out of love. Listen closer and Smith's lyrics, full of strong metaphors, are poetry detailing the pains of heartache.

In the low-fi pop of "The Truth Is" Smith tells of a "heart that won't bleed." While the drum carries on a steady stomp, she offers with honesty, "The truth is, I'm done with feeling." But optimism is found in the determined drag of the track.

"The Chrysanthemums" closes out the LP and leads the listener down a gorgeous lullaby of gentle hums. The John Steinbeck short story of the same title left an impression on Smith in graduate school. "Steinbeck's saying that all we want is to meet someone who truly understands us, but we'll never have that," Smith explains to me. But with that, her talking picks up a jovial lift. She doesn't want to be known as the girl who just sits and mopes and plays music. Smith's got roots and she's got maturity. So when she sings "Don't you tell me things will change for the better someday" in the chorus of "The Chrysanthemums," the sound is not coming from a place of bitterness, but a place of acceptance.

That stability has Smith looking for her next move. Currently that involves working at an environmental camp for fourth graders. She's looking forward to the adventure. There's no doubt that wherever Smith goes, she'll always stay sincere, crafting beautiful music along the way. And so Smith's story continues.

Buy "Flotsam and Krill" from The Tender Fruit's Myspace. It's passion that anyone who has loved will understand.

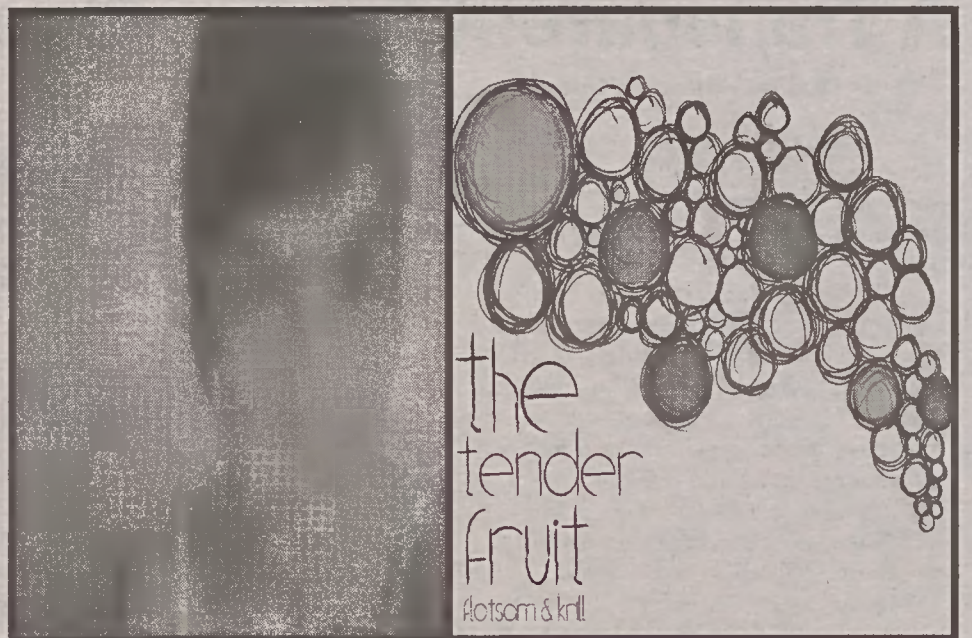


photo courtesy of The Tender Fruits

Hopscotch Music Festival: Year One



Last weekend marked the inaugural Hopscotch Music Festival, a new annual music festival sponsored by NCSU's radio station, WKNC 88.1, and The Independent. Featuring more than 120 bands, the festival hosted events in bars, clubs and restaurants throughout downtown Raleigh and featured free day shows sponsored by local record labels. Response to the event was spectacular, and it's sure to return next year in expanded and even better forms.

[Photo by Amy Hruby, featuring The Embarrassing Fruits at Pour House]

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