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MUSIC BLOG

Bella Ruse Interview

by Austen Diamond



POSTED // 2011-07-08 -The

environmentally-friendly folk-rock duo Bella Ruse will be

playing at Piper Down this Monday. Former opera singer and

frontwoman Kay Gillette talks with *City Weekly* about acquiring veggie oil for their van, sweater vests, their latest release *Kuhzo* and the powers of the kazoo.

City Weekly: What are you guys all about?

Kay Gillette: We're an indie-folk-pop duo from Minneapolis. We met in college: I [Kay] was studying opera and Joseph was majoring in Philosophy. We like kazooes and typewriters and glockenspiels. We're both control freaks so we do all of our recording and design ourselves. We think being nice to the Earth is a common sense choice not a political one.

CW: What does it mean to be an "environmentally-friendly band"?

KG: Our tour van is powered by vegetable oil, which means our travel is carbon neutral. We packaged our latest album in post-consumer cardboard and nixed the shrink wrap.

CW: I bet you get called hippies or neo-hippies or something like that a lot...

KG: We don't actually. Maybe it's because we shower fairly frequently. Or because Joseph likes to wear sweater vests.

CW: Do you ever get into issues driving a veggie oil powered van around the country?

KG: Sometimes it takes a while to find a restaurant willing to give us their used grease. And since our van smells like french fries we crave fast food all the time.



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CW: How does that work? Do you just roll into some Chinese restaurant and order some egg rolls and 15 gallons of grease?

KG: Yeah, that's pretty much it. Restaurants throw their grease away in a separate dumpster behind the building, so we go check it out and, if it's good, we go in and ask if we can take it. They usually say yes. Chinese restaurants generally have the best grease, which can be a problem because in addition to them thinking we're crazy there's also usually a language barrier.

CW: Do you have a personal favorite when it comes to fast food, with all that craving, I'm sure you've got to satisfy it?

KG: McDonald's french fries. Or sometimes Burger King onion rings.

CW: How would you describe your sound?

KG: Feist plus a little jazz; Ella Fitzgerald plus a little folk; Yael Naim minus the accent. Or, sometimes we like to call it Cute Rock.

CW: That sounds cuddly. Are your live shows like a big group hug or something?

KG: Yeah basically. Will that fly in Salt Lake City or should we play our death metal set?

CW: And you play a mean kazoo?

KG: Yep, and mine's shaped like a trumpet. I call it my "kazumpet." The title track on our most recent album is called The Kazoo Song, and Joseph's been know to do some backing kazharmonies.

CW: You just released Kuhzoo, your first full-length album, on Kickstarter. How was that process? Is Kickstarter re-engineering the album paradigm?

KG: Most of the independent artists we know and work with have been funding their albums this way. Albums are expensive to make and, traditionally, record labels have fronted that cost. But Kickstarter provides a great way to produce a quality album without a label. Plus it gets fans involved from the beginning of the process.

BELLA RUSE
Piper Down
1492 S. State
Monday, July 11, 9 p.m.
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