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MUSIC: FEATURE

Pretty Girls Make Graves



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Shy boys make out: Pretty Girls Make Graves wonder what's up

Extracurricular excellence

By [Omar Perez](#)

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Some people take vacations only to have their escape become their permanent home. The same can be said about Seattle post-punkers Pretty Girls Make Graves, which came to life two years ago after its members decided that they wanted to escape their previous bands and tackle a new musical adventure.

Well, maybe except for bassist/vocalist Derek Fudesco. As a former member of defunct Northwest punk act Murder City Devils, which garnered a respectable following from its four studio albums in the late '90s, Fudesco wasn't looking to split from his former entourage, but rather, pull double duty. The fact that his former bandmates didn't like the idea is part of the reason why PGMG started.

"I wanted to do both bands. I never wanted to quit, but when things started getting weird with that band, I realized that I had another band that I was really into," says Fudesco. "And once we started playing together, it went really well, and I realized where I was going to go."

Although just one full-length effort into their existence, Pretty Girls Make Graves (Fudesco, vocalist Andrea Zollo, guitarists Jason Clark and Nathen Johnson and drummer Nick DeWitt) have earned acclaim with equal doses of uptempo punk backbone, quirky songwriting driven by an experimental edge and guitar hooks that jangle, bounce and bask in an indie glow on songs like "Speakers Push Air" and "Sad Girls Por Vida." In the process, they have managed to silence, or at least tame, the constant critical comparisons to Sleater-Kinney or Bikini Kill they received simply because of the female-fronted situation (although in PGMG's case, Fudesco's male vocals share equal billing, enhancing the "couple's rock" aspect by the real-life couple).

While the lineup's cohesiveness appears to be a result of the efforts of a long-term writing unit, the band tried working with at least 10 different variations, and an equal number of members, since first forming in 2001. But regardless of who joined the band, the chemistry wasn't there. Finally, through Zollo (formerly of Death Wish Kids and Area 51), Clark (also currently in Kill Sadie) and Johnson (formerly in The Bee Hive Vaults), the band's identity started shaping up.

It wasn't until drummer DeWitt (also in Bee Hive Vaults), a longtime friend of Fudesco who once joined Murder City Devils selling merchandise while out on the road, that the lineup finally stabilized and the band caught its groove. One live show later, the band signed with small indie label Dim Mak and released PGMG's eponymous EP, a two-song 7-inch for Sub Pop, and last year's "Good Health" LP on Lookout! Records. Besides plucking bass strings for PGMG, Fudesco co-owns Seattle boutique label Cold Crush and plans to pull artists from its small roster and take on future tours.

Set to release their already completed follow-up effort in September as a newly signed act to Matador Records (which plucked the band from Lookout! after its owner expressed great interest in "Good Health") and embark on a return trip to Europe, PGMG dismisses any chance of a sophomore jinx with their upcoming offering, given that the band has had time to gel and to tighten and tweak its sound. And like on their previous albums, the production work of Phil Ek (Modest Mouse, Built to Spill) will help define the band's sound.

"Our next record is a lot more thought out," Fudesco explains. "We've been playing for awhile, and we all compliment each other more than we used to be able to. Everybody has their hands in the record and helped made it what it is."