

Clayton, Noyes developed early songwriting rapport

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY
Gazette Reporter

On show nights, the members of the Tern Rounders often turn into insomniacs.

"There was one show that we did that I had to go home — I had to do a triathlon the next day, and I couldn't sleep," said vocalist and guitarist Kim Noyes, while at a Saratoga Springs coffee shop with her songwriting partner in the Tern Rounders, Marc Clayton. "And it's bad — you need to sleep before something like that, and I couldn't sleep because I was so excited from the show."

It's a testament to just how much these Albany-based roots-rockers, also featuring bassist Harry Strole and drummer Jim Ketterer, care about their music. And their Americana-based, cosmic country sound has gotten many on the local scene excited, too — the group has been featured in its own Crumbs Nite Out performance at The Linda in Albany, and their track "Black Train" made No. 13 on WEXT-FM's list of the top 50 Local 518 songs of 2009.

"I'll tell ya, for me, because I've been around, it never gets old, and you just feel blessed," Clayton said. "And you can kind of understand — I mean, we're obviously on an independent level — but you can understand when you have people as humble as somebody like Jeff Bridges, who just won an award for 'Crazy Heart,' just go up there and just say, 'I am the luckiest guy alive; I get to do this for a living, I am so blessed.' That's what it feels like for me."

CROWDED SCHEDULE

With one full-length album, last year's "A Different Land," under its belt, the band continues to relentlessly perform throughout the region — next up for the group is a show at Emack and Bolio's ice cream parlor in downtown Albany on

Friday night. The band will also feature at The Linda's Capital District Keys for Kids benefit on Saturday, Feb. 27, and regularly hosts a monthly showcase at the Bread and Jam Cafe in Cohoes titled the Moonlight Jamboree, the next of which will be in April.

Noyes and Clayton's songwriting partnership continues to move full-steam ahead, as well. The duo have only known each other for a little over a year, having met through Craigslist in late 2008, but their seasoned harmonies and easy rapport suggest a much longer collaboration.

"And people say that," Noyes said. "They say, 'How long have you guys known each other; how long have you been playing together?' And when we say, 'Eh, you know, a little over a year,' they can't believe it. Because it is really special; it doesn't happen every day."

Tern Rounders

WHEN: 7 p.m. Friday
WHERE: Emack and Bolio's
Downtown, 366 Delaware Ave.,
Albany
HOW MUCH: Free
MORE INFO: 512-5100, www.ebalbany.com

Clayton, 40, moved back to his hometown of Queensbury in 2008 after a five-year stint in Nashville, which he likened to "going to roots-rock college." He was initially looking to start a simple acoustic duo.

"When I got back up into New York I was playing in a rock 'n' roll group, and just kind of needed to get back and start playing more singer-songwriter, rootsy, Americana," he said. "And it's hard to find somebody else that kind of gets that. The ad I placed was kind of subliminally messaged. I referenced Gillian Welch and David Rawlings — 'If you understand this, respond.' Kim, out of everybody that replied to the ad, she was the only one that understood."

Noyes, 31, had been playing with bands since graduating from college, but after taking a break from playing for a while decided to start looking again. Clayton's ad was the only one she responded to, and the duo communicated through e-mail extensively before even meeting, sharing song and lyric ideas.



MATTHEW MAC HAFFIE

Marc Clayton and Kim Noyes of the Tern Rounders sing during a Crumbs Nite Out at the Linda.

"Our first meeting was actually at Kim's place down in Albany, and we had obviously never met, never sung before," Clayton said. "And I think one of the first songs that we sang was ... 'Love Hurts,' in the Gram Parsons, Emmylou Harris style, and it's very rare when you can meet somebody that just fits snug vocally."

"It sounded like we had been singing together forever," Noyes said.

"For like, 20 years," Clayton added.

BUILDING A BAND

From there, the band quickly fell into place. Strole, a longtime friend of Clayton's, was a natural addition, and has since contributed songs to the group. Ketterer, a professionally trained jazz drummer, came aboard through another Craigslist ad.

The band is already halfway through its next album, tentatively titled "Livin'" after one of the tracks, with nine songs already recorded. And the songwriting never stops.

"We had a little songwriting session over the summer — Kim and I, we were up at Lake George," Clayton said. "It was just one of those accidental lucky moments again, which will be on our new album — a song called 'Thank You Sky.' It just puts that — my friend Andy, he calls it the stupid grin, and a lot of musicians know what that is, especially when you write something you're really happy about and you can't stop smiling stupidly. So we have a lot of stupid grins."

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