

The Red and Black

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Asheville-based bluegrass band to play Melting Point  
GRACE MORRIS

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When their eyes feel heavy and they still have hours of studying ahead, college students usually look to coffee, green tea or a similar semi-addictive stimulant for inspiration. Either that or they call it quits and let beer inspire them.

New bluegrass band Dehlia Low attributes its influences to the same three drinks.

With University students' thirst for live music in addition to run-of-the-mill college beverages, it is only logical that Dehlia Low would bring its old-timey Americana sound to Athens.

Dehlia Low was conceived a little more than a year ago when a fiddle player from Virginia, a guitarist from out West, a mandolin player from West Virginia and a dobro player from Winston Salem all moved to Asheville, N.C.

They said fate brought them and their bass player, a long-time Asheville resident, together at just the right time. The crew of self-taught musicians melded together quickly and began performing immediately.

When asked about the name's roots in an email interview, fiddle player and vocalist Anya Hinkle said, "The Blind Willie McTell song 'Dehlia' inspired the band's name. Currently, Dehlia is also the name of our bass."

Just four months after their first show, Dehlia Low made a "quick and dirty" 8-song EP that was intended to merely serve as a demo to send to promoters. This recording that was so roughly thrown together recently became #16 on the WNCW (a regional radio station for alternative music) top 100 albums of 2008 and has been

favorably reviewed by many acclaimed music publications.

"Despite the humble intentions of the EP," said Anya, "I feel that the material and performance are strong and reflect a variety of important influences in our music: old time, classic bluegrass and country, and original songwriting."

The most striking aspects of this self-titled album are the beautifully harmonized female vocals and the band's ability to create a rich bluegrass sound without two of the genre's most classic instruments, the banjo and harmonica. Although the vocal style has a strong old-time influence, the album is full of original material rather than covers.

"Generally writing comes from an individual and songs are brought to the band. Arranging is done together," said Anya in regards to the creative effort. "A few songs have been collaborations, but generally it works best for us to arrange from a solid song foundation. All five members of Dehlia write songs and so we constantly have a backlog of material."

In one short year Dehlia Low met, released a critically acclaimed album, and toured in the southeast. So what does the New Year hold for this ambitious band? "We already have two tours planned out of the region for this year, to Colorado and Oregon, and are booked at some major festivals this summer. We hope that we can really break into the national scene with the release of a new CD this year so that 2010 will be a major touring year for us. "

With coffee and green tea to keep them going and beer for after show celebrations, Dehlia Low is well on their way to attaining their goals.