

PLEASE DON'T TELL

If you're hellbent on breaking big you probably shouldn't call your band Please Don't Tell. After all, the name itself is hiding something and, further still, practically begging all of us to keep whatever it is to ourselves.

But like all good secrets, Please Don't Tell harbors a truth worth revealing to the world.

Brainchild of songwriter, lead vocalist, and pianist Christina Fleming, Please Don't Tell operated as a duo for years with Nicole Rimel accompanying her on cello and backing vocals; emerging from the pandemic in 2021 for a one-off show joined by violinist and vocalist Anna Hennessy, the three-piece idea stayed put. The Charlottesville, VA-based trio offer an intriguing, off-kilter mix of bedtime anxieties, folk witchery, and parlor naughtiness from an unnatural concoction of acoustic instrumentation. Yet despite all the old time-y bugaboos creeping under the melodic buoyancy of their songs, there's nothing particularly retro about the music other than the fact that it could very well have been reproduced centuries earlier—and with nary a missed note.

What the music lacks in drums, it usually makes up for in Fleming's percussive piano and her high-ceilinged operatic vocal delivery. When taken together, the sound of the three ladies and their varied influences peers down from the rafters in the menacing shapes of classical and choral strains, decades of goth club exposure, and the unshakeable shadow of bluegrass mountain sounds seeping in from their Central Virginia locale. In discovering that they are veteran performers of squalid punk holes and, well, The Kennedy Center, shouldn't shock anyone paying attention.

Lyrically, the compositions waver between recounting the difficult stories of extraordinary women and more personal meditations, often dredging up the kind of painful punchlines only found buried in hardship, while others forgo any comic defense and let the heartbreaking realities of Fleming's reflections on our dire existence hit the listener full on in the face. But more often than not, bleak misery comes with a knowing wink of contemporary black humor pointedly aimed to take down abusive husbands and skewer psychiatric conundrums of our contemporary world alike.

Placating the longstanding rage of their desperate fans who have waited for any semblance of a release, Please Don't Tell are finally delivering. Having wrapped their first professional recording at Fatback Sound in Nashville, TN with Gabe Rabben (Bill Medley, Ira Raibon) and Sam Wilson (Sons of Bill, Emmylou Harris) at the controls, the debut, six-song EP is set for release in 2024. We can only hope and expect that whatever they have committed to unleashing will carry forth a haunting half-dozen dark ditties bursting with the irrepressible skeletons they've managed to push back into their musical closets for so long.

They can plead, but they know all too well: we're going to tell. We're going to tell everybody about them.

- CM Gorey