

# OH MY DARLING TO THE TEETH

By Michael Elves

On the strength of their self-titled debut EP, Winnipeg roots quartet Oh My Darling are going places, fast. So fast that I couldn't nail them down in person and had to conduct our interview on Facebook while the band was touring Western Canada. Fiddle player Rosalyn Dennett—who is joined in the band by Allison de Groot on clawhammer banjo, Marie-Josée Dandeneau on upright and electric bass and Vanessa Kuzina on vocals, guitar and mandolin—filled me in on the past, present and future of the group.

Oh My Darling's history begins about a year-and-a-half ago, when de Groot was looking for an outlet to play in a more traditional Old Time style. Dandeneau and de Groot had been collaborating with Kuzina on her solo album and were eager to pair Kuzina's songwriting abilities with their shared love of traditional tunes. Dennett was the final piece of the puzzle and her addition to the group was a serendipitous event. "[Allison] got my name from her stepfather, who had played in a bluegrass band with my mother back in the early '80s," she says.

After some live performances, the quartet quickly realized their potential. "I think we all had pretty large ambitions from the get go. Each of us had been an-

ticipating a project we could really sink our teeth into," Dennett says.

Sink their teeth in is just what the four did. Their EP was released in February and the band is already hard at work on material for a full-length, which they're chipping away at between touring and preparing for the summer festivals. "We are so excited to hit the festival circuit," says Dennett. "It gives us the opportunity to play alongside the musicians we admire most."

An appearance at the Trout Forest Music Festival is already confirmed for August and the band will be announcing several more appearances after this magazine goes to press (check [www.myspace.com/ohmydarlingmusic](http://www.myspace.com/ohmydarlingmusic) for up-to-date details).

Dennett says the writing and recording of their full-length album is a departure from the process that resulted in their EP. On *Oh My Darling*, "Vanessa [did] most of the vocal compositions and Allison and myself compose[d] the instrumentals. The traditional tunes ("Sail Away" and "Roustabout") were arranged by the band." While the group was pleased with the album, they've been happier still with their new material. "The songs we have been working on

recently have been the most cohesive to date," Dennett explains. "The process has become more of a group effort than anything, and the arranging is beginning to really showcase the variety of musical tastes and talents in the band."

The band also has been exploring label and distribution options with an eye to releasing a full-length nationally in 2010 and using the EP as a calling card of sorts when contacting labels. But they've also had great success in selling the record off the side of the stage—success that Dennett is quick to attribute in part to the "awesome artwork of Ted Barker," who the group approached to design their album. "We love being able to collaborate with artists of different mediums," she says. Though the album is available via iTunes and Dennett appreciates the environmental benefits of digital album sales, she readily admits that she loves the recording as art object. "There is something comforting about having a tangible product to market... something for our audience to take home."

Speaking of home, Oh My Darling will be back from their western swing in time to take part in Dollyfest at the Times Change(d) on June 20, which at least one Darling is very excited about playing. "Vanessa is a Dolly Parton addict," Dennett says. The Partonesque elements she suspects Kuzina slipped into the material on *Oh My Darling* are sure to be on full display at the tribute.



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