

## By Popular Demand: The Trishas, June 6 at the Redstone Room

Written by Jeff Ignatius

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The members of the band that became the Trishas – playing June 6 at the Redstone Room – knew almost immediately that they had something special. But it took some prodding for them to pursue it.

The country quartet – Jamie Wilson, Liz Foster, Kelley Mickwee, and Savannah Welch – was assembled to perform at a 2009 tribute to country singer/songwriter Kevin Welch, Savannah’s father. Foster explained in a recent phone interview that Savannah was hesitant to participate but willing to as part of a larger group. The women weren’t friends – most of them knew one of the others, Foster said – so their initial rehearsal was their first time spending any time together.

“You can put four people together and have them all sing the right harmony notes, but it still doesn’t blend,” Foster said. “You have to really learn each other’s voices to really click right.”

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But during that first rehearsal, on “Satan’s Paradise” (written by Kevin Welch and Claudia Scott), the clicking was evident. “We just hit the note, and it was ridiculous,” she said. “Of course, we’re girls, so we’re all jumping around, screaming.”

After the tribute, Foster said, the group started getting gig offers. “When we got together, we were having fun,” she said, “but we’d all just come out of these other projects, and the last idea any of us had was doing a girl band. Not even girls really want to be in a girl band. ... [But] we had enough people talking to us for the next month or so that we were like, ‘I don’t know. Do we *want* to be in a band?’ ... We had too many people asking us, and it was too much fun for us to say, ‘Nah, we’re just not going to do it.’”

The band’s debut album, last year’s *High, Wide, & Handsome*, is a showcase for its signature individual and group vocals, but it’s also a set of strong songs. As the

*Austin Chronicle*

wrote: “While attention on the four-part harmonies ... remains front and center, it’s the songwriting ... that suggests a rarer cumulative talent. With a base of co-writers – Bruce Robison, Owen Temple, Jason Eady, and Dustin and Kevin Welch, among others – the Trishas craft songs so tightly wound that they can almost be heard spooling from single-line conceits into expert emotional narratives.”

Foster explained that the Trishas have rarely tried to write as a full group: “You’ve almost got too many people interjecting. ... There are so many ideas coming at you.”

Instead, they worked in smaller groups with other songwriters – and Foster said she learned a lot: “Each songwriter has their own little tools. ... A writing session is successful if you come away with a new little tool. Very rarely has that not happened.”

A common lesson, she said, was “the beauty in simplicity. ... You want it to be as descriptive as possible in as few words as possible.”

The problem – a good one to have – was a surfeit of material. “When you have four people doing that for over a year, you get a lot of songs,” she said.

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Even when candidates for the album were pared down, there were more 30 songs, she said. The Trishas finally settled on 16 tracks, with 14 of them appearing on *High, Wide, & Handsome* and one as a bonus track.

The result is slightly unwieldy, but the sheer volume allows for lots of interesting digressions while still having a dominant country character. The driving “Little Sweet Cigars” – softened by cooing backing vocals – stands out in the primary vein, but the lounge-y jazz blues of “Cold Blooded Love” is no less effective, with its balance of soulful and delicate lead vocals. “John Wayne Cowboy” toys with Southern rock, while “Over Forgiving You” is a radio-ready ballad with only the guitars holding it tenuously to country.

One aim for the album was finding songs in which “there’s a lot of room to do all sorts of things with four voices,” Foster said, an acknowledgment that “what we are is four vocals.”

And that fundamental trait – along with the artistic freedom of not being tied to a label – allowed the group to give *High, Wide, & Handsome* wide berth in both variety and length. “Having four different singers,” Foster said, “it didn’t wear out people as much, because you’re not listening to the same person singing 14 songs.”

*The Trishas will perform on Thursday, June 6, at the Redstone Room (129 Main Street, Davenport; [RiverMusicExperience.org](http://RiverMusicExperience.org)). The 7:30 p.m. show also features the Dirt Road Rockers, and tickets are \$10.*

*For more information on the Trishas, visit [TheTrishas.com](http://TheTrishas.com).*