

# Juicy Fruit the Pure Pop of Eve's Plum

INTERVIEW BY KK KOZIK

**D**eep pop — catchy and soulful, and you can hear it on the radio. "It's all we've ever wanted to be, a pop band," croons Colleen Fitzpatrick of Eve's Plum. "We have a fond appreciation for many things popular."

Fresh-faced Fitzpatrick turns to bandmate Michael Koch for his take. Pausing, she fiddles with a lock of her bobbed hair, newly dyed red. Her pink sneakers glitter in the city light like nail polish. He deliberates a while. Both members of Eve's Plum are singularly thoughtful in their comments on pop. His eyes dart back and forth behind his heavy-framed glasses as he ponders.

"On one level, I think pop is music you can derive an emotional response from — it makes you happy, it makes you sad. It implies a certain kind of accessibility," Fitzpatrick continues. "I don't think pop's a naughty word in the slightest. It's tasty, it's fun. A lot of people take it further and think that if it's not weird, if it doesn't really challenge you, it's immature. And I kind of disagree with that. We aren't thinking of ourselves in relationship to pop culture of all types. We are not tremendously earnest artists but we are not super-hip."

Even the name of the band seems to encapsulate the universality of image and meaning that is the hallmark of pop culture. "Eve's Plum" suggests both the here and now as well as the there and then, playing, of course, with the name of the actress who played the awkward middle sister on a historic sitcom while somehow conjuring up the Fall of Man but with the wrong fruit. The catchy title track of their new album, *Cherry Alive*, in fact seems to continue this conceit.

It was suggested by the Delmore Schwartz poem but has been respun to imply ripening sexuality. But, while wasting away in Lolitaville, the band

wants you to know they are not without morals — "Jesus Loves You (Not as Much as I Do)" is the first single from the album. Somehow this foursome, which includes Michael's identical twin Ben on drums and Theo Mack on bass, has managed to cram into a single package the history of mass culture all the way from the Bible through the Brady Bunch.

## MASS MAYENS

It's a job they take seriously. For this, their second album, they had to take fate into their own hands. According to Fitzpatrick, they "were signed really prematurely." Both she and Koch express some reluctance about the record that followed, 1993's *Easy*. "This time," Fitzpatrick adds, "when we went into the studio, we had a greater sense of what we wanted to accomplish. This time we had the ability to foresee how certain songs could/would develop and how to make them sound a certain way. Last time there were songs I thought would sound great recorded and they just didn't. Sometimes somehow songs didn't sound so great live but did sound great recorded. We were able to get a greater sense of this."

Koch agrees it was their experience under the belts that made the difference. "We really experimented at the demo stage, which we did ourselves, to make sure we liked what we were getting. We wanted to make a record that we would really like to listen to. We wanted to have fun and keep the same basic high energy vibe. Now, when I listen to this record and hear stuff I like, I think, 'Wow, that's cool,' but I didn't do that with the last one."

Eve's Plum's deserved confidence shows all over *Cherry Alive*. Recorded at Studio 54, its twelve tracks pound the pavement of rock and roll, searching for the fresh and the funky and teasing you out of your seat and into a groove. Sometimes they seem familiar — "Cherry Alive" uses that bouncing beat so reminiscent of The Dores. "Loved by You" steals the phrase "I want to be loved by you and nobody else but you" but

applies it to a different melody in what Fitzpatrick considers to be an inversion of the original. In the new version, the "I" is needy or compulsive and ends up just settling for being hated. "Lipstick" deals with the feminine/feminist predicament which has to do with the fact that the more beautiful or overtly sexual the woman, the less credibility she is accorded for being articulate or intelligent. "When I get on stage," she says, "there are some people who will only see me as a giant pussy and that can be frustrating and silly."

## SWEET TART

For Fitzpatrick, whose cry soprano recalls Blossie or Hastica or Christina Amphlett of The Divinyls, the making of *Cherry Alive* was a chance to experiment with her vocal persona through different treatments and deliveries. Her alternately sassy and sultry vocals adorn the band's power-chocked structures like a daisy woven into chicken wire, but it's a fortuitous juxtaposition. Producer Fred Maher (Matthew Sweet's *Girlfriend*, Lou Reed's *New York*, Katell Krueger's *O Season O Canada*), a drummer himself, worked with the band members to beef up the bottom half of the sound.

The heavy rhythm parts go hard in hand with Fitzpatrick's phrasing like beauty and the beast. This is one of several qualities evident in the band and their music. Koch and Fitzpatrick are collaborators in the creation of the songs, though jamming with the band has produced its results, too, and their rapport with each other is apparent. Their initial meeting was serendipitous — Fitzpatrick had responded to an ad for a singer in *The Village Voice* and when she arrived Koch realized they had shared a class at NYU.

Touring and living in the same house when not on the road produce their own tensions, though. One reputed on-stage fight while touring upstairs resulted in a concussion for Michael. Throwing his guitar into the ceiling, he dislodged some bricks which fell and cooked him on the head. But such blow ups are \*



one occasion, even between the other duo in the group, the Ketch brothers. Ben and Michael each have their own duties in the band, and Michael, at least, denies that his higher profile in the band generates any friction. Fitzpatrick notes, apropos their twinning, that even though they say they don't they definitely have some unearthly connection. Ketch, joking, puts his index fingers to his temples and murmurs, "I'm getting a message."

When asked if she wishes she had a twin in the band, Fitzpatrick says, "Hell no," but admits "it would be nice to have such unconditional support." It is likely that Eve's Plum, with their album on the shelves and "Jesus" getting plenty of airplay, will be getting plenty of support in the coming months. The future looks rosy. They have embarked on what they think will be a year of successive tours. Recently returned from a stint with My

Life With the Thrill Kill Kutz, they will hit the road again with Better Than Eyes in December and reports are they are making their audiences very happy, critics, too.

Given the way things are going, it seems Eve's Plum will have to get used to a new favorite flavor — the sweetness of success.