

LOCAL ROUNDUP: Erica Blinn, the Regionals

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By Joel Oliphint |

Blinn's recording debut is well-chaperoned

"Shut your mouth, get out, or get used to it," sings **Erica Blinn** on her self-titled debut EP.

Like 2011 breakout artist Lydia Loveless, Blinn is an up-and-coming Columbus girl with talent and spunk beyond her years. She has been surrounded by music her whole life, working at Ace in the Hole Records and playing in bands since she was 14.

For her debut, Blinn wisely surrounded herself with capable musicians. Watershed's Colin Gawel gets co-writing credit on five of the six tracks, and for a backing band Blinn enlisted North Carolina's Terry Anderson and the Olympic Ass Kickin Team (which will be in town Saturday for Blinn's release show).

There's nothing trendy about Blinn's songs. Recorded and produced by Mike Landolt, standout tracks "Pull the Trigger" and "Choices" sound like they could have been written any time in the past 30 years. This is Midwestern, heartland rock 'n' roll with nods to other no-nonsense female band leaders like Chrissie Hynde and Pat Benatar. If that's your bread, Blinn is your butter.

The lone ballad, "I'm Gonna Kiss You," is sonically great in the hands of Anderson and his band, but lyrically it's a bit cheesy. Blinn is at her best when showcasing her no-nonsense attitude. It's a minor misstep, though, on a promising debut EP.

A CD release show will be held at 10 p.m. Saturday (Oct. 22) at the Rumba Cafe, 2507 Summit St. Joining Blinn are Terry Anderson and the Olympic Ass Kickin Team and the Moving Parts. Cover: \$7.

New band made up of familiar faces

It's been a good year for debut albums in Columbus, most notably from Psandwich and Saints Seneca. Now we can add the first full-length from new band the **Regionals** to the list, too.

The Regionals aren't exactly fresh-faced youngsters. You may recognize singer/guitarist Jason Gonzalez from the Todd May-fronted Lilybandits in the '90s, and ex-Youngstown bassist Kevin Sturdevant played in the Champions of All Time. Rounding out the lineup are Paul Meeker on drums and Jason Hambach on guitar. (Full disclosure: I also play music with Hambach.)

The Regionals played their first show in March, which is hard to believe given the fully realized sound on this self-titled debut, which owes much to the college rock scene of the early to mid-'90s.

Built to Spill is probably the best reference point for the Regionals. They're a guitar lover's band, the instrument playing as much of a melodic role as the vocals-if not more so.

The pretty and powerful guitars on the epic, six-minute closing track, "Flooded House," and the jangle-y riffs on "Draft Dodger" are instantly memorable. Kudos also to the Black Swans' Keith Hanlon, who engineered and mixed the album, for ably capturing the crucial guitar sounds and not burying them in the mix.

Gonzalez's tenor slides in and out of key, but in a pleasant way that's more charming than annoying, bringing to mind local Sean Gardner (Kopaz, Winter Makes Sailors) and emo forebears like Sunny Day Real Estate and the Promise Ring.

Name-dropping doesn't do this debut justice, though. The Regionals import just enough from their influences to give you a slightly

warm feeling of nostalgia alongside the excitement of discovery.

An album-release show featuring Total Foxx and Matt Liller will be held at 9 p.m. Saturday (Oct. 22) at Hal & Al's, 1297 Parsons Ave. An album download (name your price) is available at theregionalswastaken.com.

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