

MUSIC

Punk in the Family

PDX Sister Band's *First Spicy Hits* by Julianne Shepherd

THE COVER ART of Black Peppercorns' *First Spicy Hits* warns "contents heavier than they may appear." The band, comprised of two nine-year-old sisters, plays a few screamy garage numbers (in near-perfect rhythm) that rumble and roll with primal attitude. But any

gnarled edges are sweetened by a sometimes-breathy vocal timbre and simile-laden, poetic lyrics (as on the minimal "The Stars (are Echoing All their Beauty Tonight)"). It can be as visceral and spooky as *another* sister band, Quix*o*tic, while maintaining inspiring self-possession and a sassy sense of entitlement—and its purveyors are still an eighth of a decade from even hitting puberty. (Make no mistake, however: guitarist/vocalist Io Fortier-Kuttner will turn ten a few days after this CD release show.)

Formed after they attended the Rock and Roll Camp for Girls, sisters Fortier-Kuttner and Zayna Langer (drums/vox) have been playing in Black Peppercorns for about a year. Their debut number was an enthusiastic, screamy theme song about a boy and a girl who, according to Langer,

"get married and have four children named Jerry, Mike, Joanna, and Chris."

"We just thought "Black Peppercorns" was such a good name that it should go in a song," explains Fortier-Kuttner. "It doesn't mean anything; it just sounds really punk."

"We look like we would probably be going like, 'Mary had a little lamb,'" she continues, "but really, we don't. We are actually like, 'ARRGHH!'"

Black Peppercorns would like to tour Maine, where they have a sales representative, and Bora Bora, because Langer likes the name "Bora Bora." First, though, they'd like to pay off their debt for the manufacturing of their CD, and cut another record with new material. Fortier-Kuttner explains, "We've recently written a new song called 'Stop Where You Are.' Our brother plays banjo on it and it's different than all our other songs; it's like country, sort of. It's about this girl who's just gotten married to this guy and then finds out he has a lot of other girls. One of the lines is, 'How many girls? Fifteen or 16 or maybe 23?' and she's really mad at him."

On *First Spicy Hits'* animalistic first track, "First Aid Kit," which is about a

first aid kit, Fortier-Kuttner barks, "Cause I'VE GOT! Splinters! UP AND DOWN MY BACK!" Between vocals, she breaks up the beat with an overdriven flurry of chords over Langer's steady drumming. "I play really hard drums, and I like being really strong, and I get strong from playing drums," observes Langer.

"She can hit the bass drum *really* hard," says Fortier-Kuttner. "I mean really, really hard. I mean *really* hard." ■



BLACK PEPPERCORNS Sorry, but they're adorable!