



Blunderbusst's songs are about "sex and death." They are, from left, Jen Scaffidi, Carson Cessna and Carolyn Gates.

PHOTO/MARK EARNEST

The long term

Blunderbusst

Rebounding and rebirth in music is

essential for bands that have been together for more than a decade. Even though it took miles of rough road to navigate—including a hiatus—Carson City indie rock band Blunderbusst is in its own post-cocoon moment right here and now.

"I perceive it like a long-term relationship," said Blunderbusst drummer Carolyn Gates. "If we have to take two years to get our shit together and handle family business and deal with our breakdowns, that's fine. Having a hiatus was never a fearful or fraught thing."

"We've relearned what we do and how we play, and we've gained new skills," said guitarist Carson Cessna. "I think we've really doubled down on what we do and gained a lot of confidence as a unit and individually, and what it means to be Blunderbusst. We have a pretty strong sonic identity, to the point where we can experiment and do any kind of song."

On Aug. 9, Texas indie label Slow Start Records will release *Monarch of the Mountain*, a six-song EP from Blunderbusst that's also available as a double 7-inch single at their shows. *Monarch*, recorded in Reno at Wires and Noise studio, has already received national attention thanks to song premieres on music sites Ghetoblaster and The Big Takeover.

It's been years in the making, but Blunderbusst always takes its time. Formed by guitarist and singer Jen Scaffidi and Gates in 2005, the band played its first show a year later and sporadically released albums and EPs and played shows for the next six years. Cessna joined, first on synth, in 2011, but soon after the band became less

of a priority. Scaffidi's mom Bobbi passed away in 2012, and by the time 2014 came around, as Scaffidi puts it, "I wasn't writing new songs, and it wasn't really fun."

In 2016, Scaffidi started writing again, and Cessna moved to guitar. Their first years back together were spent figuring out if it was still worth it.

"It was kind of a beta test," Gates said. "Let's get in a room and see if it's still fun, or let's not do it."

During this time, the band also took what Cessna called "extreme sonic austerity measures" and pared their sound in general. It isn't that far removed from a decade-plus ago, though. The roots are in modern alterna-folk songwriters like Neko Case and Brandi Carlisle, but with tons of classic indie rock accents, from twisting time signatures on almost every song to Cessna's pivoting from atmospheric melodies to flat-out noise.

Scaffidi said that she sees Cessna's role in the band as "the vibemaster." For his part, he called himself a support musician in service to Blunderbusst's songs.

"I have the freedom to just get wild and shape sound," he said. "In a way, I feel like what I'm trying to do is be the sonic equivalent to what Jen is singing about."

Scaffidi's words—abstract and evocative of emotions without quite pinning them down—cover some remarkable ground. The title track to *Monarch* deals in part with her father, Sherrie, who came out as transgender in 2015. Other lyrics discuss the grieving process following her mother's death.

Scaffidi said her lyrics are written by "grabbing all the bits and pieces of stuff that I've been thinking about over the years. I feel like we only write about death and sex, and sometimes one is a metaphor for the other." □

Blunderbusst's EP release party is at 8 p.m. on Saturday, July 13, at Foxy Olive, 220 Mill St. Hear some of the record and learn more about the band at blunderbusst.com.

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