

Real Vocal String Quartet

Knocking the Dust off the Strings

Imagine yourself as an A-student who wants to use your hard-earned skills in a way that shows you can have regular-kid fun, too.

That's essentially the situation that violinists Irene Sazer and Alisa Rose, violist Dina Maccabee and cellist Jessica Ivry—known collectively as the funky, genre-bending Real Vocal String Quartet (RVSQ)—were in when Feist discovered them via YouTube. The singer subsequently invited them to play on her latest album *Metals* and tour with her.

Lucky break, right? Not when you consider the vast amounts of practice and experience that the Bay Area-based group puts into their razor-sharp classical-by-way-of-folk style of music. “I had people calling



me a nerd for carrying a case,” says Maccabee with a laugh of her early school days toting around classical instruments.

Sazer, who founded the quartet in 2003, affirms, “Every single one of us had that drive and love of advanced music to take it to an advanced level. But sometimes music just has to be fun. We know if we are doing our best, it will translate.”

And that's what they've done on their

self-titled album, mixing world, folk, pop, blues and classical into a lush sonic feast. Each of the women has a deeply rooted classical history, but they also love artists like Carole King, Tori Amos and The Beatles, who clamored for equal attention during their youth. RVSQ is looking to take their melting-pot sound even further on their next record, which is currently in the works.

“We joke a lot that because we are all the youngest siblings of our families, the one thing we share is a little bit of a kamikaze approach,” Maccabee says, recalling when the others invited her to join the band. “Coming out of the classical string thing—and having a chance to do this—I immediately said, ‘Yes, absolutely!’”

Part of the appeal for all involved is the chance to perform original material versus centuries-old classical compositions that leave little room for improvisation or fun.

“We do what *we think* is interesting and exciting,” says Maccabee. “We don’t try to do what’s cool or hip. We are all—maybe—old enough to know we’ll never win at that game.”
Nancy Dunham