

# KCSTAGE

53 December 2005



## A la cartoona

**Pours on the Sauce**

**Classics for Kids**

**The Culture Wars**

**Holiday Roundup**

**Student Finds Success**

**Music Hall Renovation**

**AFTRA Organizing Drive**

**Brownlee Heads Young Audiences**

[www.kcstage.com](http://www.kcstage.com)

# ALACARTOONA

## Alacartoon Pours on the Sauce

by Michelle Cotton • [mcotton@kcstage.com](mailto:mcotton@kcstage.com)

You've seen the sexy flyers featuring vintage nudes, the posters which will probably be collectors items someday, and you've probably gotten a few of the clever e-mail promos for the band Alacartoon, the four-piece ensemble based on German Cabaret. Perhaps you should come to the cabaret old chum and experience where all the brilliant marketing comes from. I promise you will be well sated.

On a balmy November evening at PotPie restaurant in Westport, the stage is set for a titillating evening of Alacartoon. The band, featuring Providence Forge, Ruby Falls, Bachelor Calwood, and Archibald Drexel will perform songs of Love, Lust, Death, Murder, Liquor, Longing, and Trash, all with a distinctive theatrical bent. Together since 2002, these musicians/characters are all veteran performers with long and varied musical pasts, who blend to create a unique recipe. Their concept is derived from the cabaret, yet completely modern, relevant and tasteful. Their twisted-at-times lyrics are offset by catchy melodies and simple instrumentation — accordion, bass, guitar, and a small drum kit.

The foursome all take the small stage, it looks cramped, but this act can be adapted as easily for a small corner as it can to fill a much larger venue. Their theatricality translates well to large clubs and parties, but the intimacy and connection they have with a smaller crowd can also be quite satisfying. Whatever the circumstances, Alacartoon sells herself like a seasoned pro.

Tonight the crowd is peppered with Alacartoon virgins, poor unsuspecting lambchops.

Also present are a fair number of familiar faces, those who have tasted Alacartoon's goods, and eagerly await another handout. The show promises to be delicious with a sampling of new items on their menu. The casual environment is enlivened as they begin playing, and a few people are not quite sure what they are about to see, oh, but wait. The phrase Cult Following might apply, as Alacartoon wins over an audience long before the first act ends.

Providence Forge, otherwise known as the Berlin Bomber plays the bass and wears a white shirt under suspenders, vintage hat, and a cruel slash of lipstick. Archibald Drexel, International Man of Style lurks in the background hunched over his accordion, a bit like George the Quiet Beatle. Bachelor Calwood keeps precision time on a small drum kit, while Ruby Falls oozes all over the stage and audience with lighthearted playfulness in a sparkly vintage figure hugging dress, and Louise Brooks wig. Together they flirt, taunt, and engage the audience with wanton abandon.

Tonight's focus is a kind of deranged Democracy. "Invest in Alacartoon" is a recurring theme, as Providence Forge hoists a large tip jar. They pass around a hat with songs for the audience to help choose their

playlist, yet reserve the right to reject said songs.

Alacartoon is free to change her menu at will. Fresh ideas only add to the evening's fare. Ruby Falls performs a spoken word piece with minimalist musical accompaniment, and PotPie takes on a European Coffeehouse feel. A Russian folk song is added, "The Drums", a dark anti-war ballad — shades of Iraq. Songs are interspersed with clever banter, and good-natured but cynical humor. Placed on each table is their signature matchbook, a flyer for upcoming shows, and another flyer containing a kind of manifesto which reads "Out of these troubled times... A New World Order can emerge". The quote is from former President Daddy Bush's speech from Setp 11, 1990 to a joint session of Congress. Inside the flyer are more oddities like "Alacartoon is the only savings bank which pays eternal interest", and "Alacartoon is the only rescue before the slavery of the Understanding" (Entente), on a background of architecture and ghostly-eyed faces from a bygone day. It is an effective theatrical twist, which draws the participant into a different era.

Tonight Alacartoon revives original songs not heard in a while, haunting melodies for ballads, and upbeat rhythms for punchy pop songs. All their songs are memorable however, and flow smoothly from one to the next without a clunker in the bunch. Ruby Falls and Providence Forge's vocals merge with a nice, robust flavor. The sound is uncluttered, balanced, and strong, but never tame. One can say Alacartoon is erotic without being raunchy, classic not dated, and spicy without being overpowering. The players commit to the style and concept with passion and dedication, which boosts the act from a mere band to a true theatrical experience.

After warming up they play a few songs from recent CD release "Songs from the Show", available on [www.cdbaby.com](http://www.cdbaby.com), and [www.alacartoon.com](http://www.alacartoon.com), as well as at their performances. One of my favorites is "Turn Away" with Ruby taking the lead, and persona of a shunned woman. Providence Forge takes over on "The Apartment", a catchy little ditty about a serial killer. He transforms into the menacing persona with great relish, eyes flashing, and teeth bared. On "Just a Drink or Two" he works the room, offstage, no mic, flirting with men, rubbing their heads, sitting on their laps, and at one point, he notices a girl on a cell phone, gently takes it from her and sings the lyric "It should have been me!" into it. She grins sheepishly, then takes it back, and chastised, hangs up. On another number, Ruby Falls merges with the audience, and dances with a couple of girls. Other favorites are "Every Saint Needs A Sinner", "For Us" and "Die Laughing". A few regular audience members have fun singing along to their catchy lyrics. By the end of the evening it was obvious that the audience hungered for more.

After the show Alacartoon was gracious

enough to offer this writer a shamelessly brief, but fun interview appropriately enough among the trash bins behind the venue:

**ME:** Archibald Drexel, International Man of Style...Boxers or Briefs?

**Archibald Drexel:** Boxers.

**Providence Forge:** Boxers.

**Ruby Falls:** I'm not actually wearing any underwear.

**ME:** Ms. Falls, what is the meaning of life?

**Ruby Falls:** Sex, Drugs, Cabaret.

**ME:** What effect would you like to have on your devoted legions of fans?

**Bachelor Calwood:** We want them to all go home and get laid.

**Ruby Falls:** We take it as an honor that people go home and have massive sex with their chosen person.

**Bachelor Calwood:** Or themselves!

**ME:** Or Toys?

**Ruby Falls:** Yes!

**ME:** I'm friskier already.

**Bachelor Calwood:** Especially toys with Black & Decker on it.

**Providence Forge:** But not in the bathtub!

**ME:** Actually they make them waterproof now.

**Bachelor Calwood:** Black & Decker?! So now we can all mow underwater.

**Providence Forge:** And it's not only that, we want them to go home, and we want them to have sex, but we always see ourselves

as a slap in the face to the right wing and conservatives, and all that type of stuff, but we usually shroud all that stuff behind the sexuality, but tonight we said let's pull back the veil.

**ME:** Do you prefer boys or girls.

**Bachelor Calwood:** Yes.

**Providence Forge:** Why me?!

**ME:** Since Sex is a dominant component of your act, what happens if you are not feeling frisky?

**Ruby Falls:** I wouldn't know.

**Bachelor Calwood:** We call Frisky over, and we feel her!

**ME:** What are your favorite foods?

**Bachelor Calwood:** Anything that PotPie has to offer because they're a fine restaurant.

**Ruby Falls:** All the fruit and vegetables that float in drinks.

**ME:** What is the best way to mix a martini?

**Providence Forge:** I like my martinis filthy dirty. With three olives, and also if you could stuff the olives with gorgonzola cheese.

**ME:** Shaken, stirred?

**Providence Forge:** Shaken. Always shaken

**Ruby Falls:** I'm also a shaken girl, but I also like almonds in my olives.

**ME:** That's a little nutty.

**Ruby Falls:** Knee slapper.

**ME:** Does the music scene here provide enough spice for you?

**Ruby Falls:** We provide our own spice.

**ME:** What musical acts do you enjoy?

**Ruby, Archibald, Providence, Bachelor:** BACON SHOE! BACON SHOE!

**ME:** Ms. Falls, you were recently voted KC's most sexy female singer. Does it make you sad?

**Alacartoon:** (much laughter and something about stuffing the ballot box)

**Bachelor Calwood:** OH is THAT what you call it?

**ME:** Have you received extravagant gifts

from your devoted fans?

**Ruby Falls:** Oh! We got a fabulous gift tonight! We got five pumpkins out front each individually decorated with each of our names in a different font, and a big one that said Alacartoon with the little hat, and the lips and the smoking cigarette that said Alacartoon.com.

**ME:** Did you enjoy performing recently with the Violent Femmes?

**Ruby Falls:** Yes!

**ME:** Did they enjoy you?

**Providence Forge:** That was a fantastic show because we sat up there, and we started playing, and the room was filling up as we were playing, and that's a hard room to play because people are trying to get their drinks, and by the end of the show we had every single person in that room watching us.

**ME:** I'm sure that's true.

**Bachelor Calwood:** Like people watched the Hindenburg.

**ME:** Speaking of the Hindenburg, during Oktoberfest, do you long for the Fatherland?

**Ruby Falls:** I long for beer. Did you read our manifesto?

**ME:** Yes I did, and that was very interesting, what inspired you to do that whole thing tonight?

**Providence Forge:** Do you want a real answer, er....

**ME:** Anything amusing.

**Providence Forge:** We're not your monkey boys!

**ME:** Do you all love to love, or hate to love, or is it all just so blissfully painful?

**Bachelor Calwood:** To love is to suffer, to not love is to suffer, to suffer is to suffer, I hope you're getting this down.

**ME:** Does anything really prepare you for love?

**Archibald Drexel:** Shaving.

**Bachelor Calwood:** Maybe a little corn oil.

**ME:** Alacartoon is thriving now, having arisen from the rags, how does She see Her future?

**Bachelor Calwood:** Well certainly Ragless.

**ME:** Would Alacartoon ever sell her soul to the behemoth music industry?

**Alacartoon:** (wry groanings all around)

**Providence Forge:** Does the behemoth music industry have a large penis?

**ME:** What tickles Alacartoon?

**Ruby Falls:** Each other.

**Providence Forge:** Feathers on a high speed drill.

**Archibald Drexel:** Alcohol

**Bachelor Calwood:** A Harley

**ME:** Is the pie here good?

**Ruby Falls:** The pie here is great!

**Providence Forge:** Are you talking about right here in this circle?

**ME:** Ok.

**Alacartoon:** MMMMMM VERY good!

Be sure to attend Alacartoon's New Year's Eve show at the Uptown Theatre where they will be wandering loose among the many stages until 11:30pm.

And check out [www.alacartoon.com](http://www.alacartoon.com) for all the latest Alacartoon tidbits, information on German Cabaret, as well as many other goodies.

By Michelle Cotton, Contributing Writer