

At Hodi's Half Note Thursday, Brent Cowles and the Foxhole Family Band gave a performance that was at once head-banging, grittily soulful and delicately tender. Cowles' voice, which moves effortlessly between a soft, mournful falsetto and a down-home growl, catalyzes the contrasts of the sound. A female bassists adds alto harmonies.

The vigor of the crescendoes comes from a pair of electric guitars. The rhythm player favors muted chords, which the lead player generally supplements with loud fills laden with reverb and vibrato.

The rhythm guitarist sometimes trades his ax for a keyboard, from which he elicits sustained, richly toned chords.

A blown amp precipitated a true unplugged section during which Cowles and the female vocalist came to the edge of the stage and delivered a heart-wrenching cover of Sam Cooke's "Bring It on Home to Me."

When the power came back, the band tore through a raucous rendition of Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Fortunate Son." The two guitarists traded solos; then, a drum solo led into a reprisal of the song's main riff and a final chorus.

The band forwent the traditional pageantry of an encore—"We're not gonna leave and come back, we'll just play a few more songs," Cowles explained. One of those songs was "How to Be Okay Alone," the title cut from an upcoming album the band plans to release next Spring. The song began with Cowles' falsetto spreading itself over a quiet acoustic rhythm part. Later, the bassist joined in with vocal harmonies, the drummer added soft cymbals and the keyboardist contributed an organ-like synth drone. Cowles' ability to channel a range of emotions through his voice was arguably the highlight of the show, and was on full display in the new tune.

Cowles, formerly of the indie band You, Me and Apollo, sounds comfortable in this new environment.

Folk-country trio Whipoorwill, which consists of Alysia Kraft (electric guitar, acoustic guitar, harmonica, vocals), Staci Foster (acoustic guitar, banjo, vocals) and Tobias Bank (drums) opened for Cowles with an accessible set built around exquisite harmonies and solid folk songwriting sensibility. The distorted moans of Kraft's guitar gave the sound a kind of punk-blues flavor, and her harmonica married melancholy longing and boot-stomping joy.

Whipperwool's first full-length release, Good To Be Around, is available now wherever you get music.