

Yvonne Champagne: Joshua Tree's All-female Art Rock Band

Yvonne Champagne is a trio of artistic female rockers from Joshua Tree, CA who came of age musically in the 1990s post-punk riot grrrl era. They didn't know each other at that time, but their experience in cutting edge female-powered bands like Burning Bush (Phoenix), Walking with Edna (Cleveland), Butch Candy (NYC), London and the Look, and The Secret Ceremony (Portland) has led them to create one of Joshua Tree's most interesting, heavy, art rock fuzz bands. Their third and latest album release, "Witch Moon," is due out in April 2024.

Denise Tanguay (drums), Cat Celebrezze (bass) and Susan Kearn (bass), met in 2018 as exhibiting artists at Joshua Tree art galleries. They admired each other's work and shared stories about their past creative lives, including extensive experience as bass players in post-punk bands. The women began jamming on Tanguay's desert patio in 2020 during COVID-19 social distancing, prompting the evolution of an acoustic band. The line-up was Tanguay on acoustic guitar/vocals, Kearns on bass/vocals, Celebrezze on sax/keyboard/vocals and Jessica Berryhill on drums. When Tanguay shared old photos of her independent-spirited grandmother, Yvonne Champagne, it was the catalyst for their idea to form an all-female band.

Yvonne Champagne's self-titled EP, "Yvonne Champagne," debuted on April 20, 2021. The recording's Mojave mojo and champagne lounge sound wraps rocking grit around an acoustic soul. With down and dirty grooves like "On My Way" and the atmospheric jams in "Bloom," the album delivers snaky sax solos, paeans to the desert sky, and a love song to the real Yvonne Champagne.

In 2022, Yvonne Champagne re-grouped, turned up and evolved to its current avant-garde fuzz rock sound with Tanguay on drums and both Kearns and Celebrezze on bass. The band opened a mini-tour for female power trio Burning Bush's reunion shows in Phoenix and Tucson, and premiered songs from its second album, "Murder Winds." Inspired by the dudes with delay who pioneered the desert rock genre, the seven-song sojourn of detuned female fuzz is all about living with the wicked cyclones of the Joshua Tree desert – with the ominous "Dirt 'n Dust," the fuzz-and-wah of "Murder Winds Comin' Your Way," the Sabbath-inspired "Murder Winds Blues," and the uncategorizable dance anthem, "Make Like the Murder Winds."

Yvonne Champagne performs in masks and costumes that reflect the current song cycle. Every year the band unveils a new musical concept, influenced by first-hand Joshua Tree desert experiences. Their third album, "Witch Moon," is about another dynamic desert experience: the night sky. An invocation to the magick and mystery of the Mojave desert, the album delivers a phase-delay lunar odyssey in the key of heavy fuzz with the running rumble of "Casting Shadows," the heavy wonder of "Moonrise Over the Mountain," and its danceable title track, "Witch Moon."

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