

BANDWAGON!

The more the merrier with Ohbijou.

Ohbijou's Casey Mecija picks up bandmates the way some girls collect Louboutins. But her passion for collaboration has resulted in a lot more than a pile of swish shoes; the Toronto-based orchestral-pop septet is releasing its second album, *Beacons*, this spring.

Brantford, Ont., native Mecija, 27, began by playing the guitar on her own during high school but found it a bit lonesome. She discovered her very first bandmate close to home: her sister, Jenny, 23, who plays the violin and the organ. While attending Ryerson University, Mecija added bass and banjo player Heather Kirby, 27, to the roster.

From there, cellist Anissa Hart, 30, signed on. The quartet kept running into local musicians Jamie Bunton, 28, and Ryan Carley, 30; the two were soon invited to try out their drumming and piano skills with the band. (Member number seven, mandolin player Andrew Kinoshita, 29, is currently on a brief recess from the band in order to attend law school.)

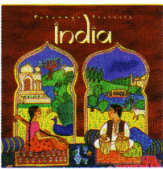
"It started organically, music-wise," says Mecija. "We didn't really start off as friends or anything. I

never envisioned such a big band, but that's how it happened. We're all integral now." All those musicians means a lot of variety: Between them, they also play ukulele, wind organ, glockenspiel, trumpet, melodica, synths and omnichord. Most of them sing too, creating a lush pop soundscape complemented by heart-tuggingly sweet vocals.

Ohbijou even recorded *Beacons* in a few different locales, including Alberta art institution The Banff Centre. (The band spent a couple of weeks there as part of the centre's first-ever Indie Band Residency, which included writing and rehearsal time and the chance to record and mix music.)

Casey's own house and Bunton's grandmother's cottage on Muldre Lake in backwoods Ontario also doubled as recording studios. "That way, we could draw different experiences and sounds from different places," says Mecija. Ohbijou is planning on taking its pretty pop on the road this spring and summer with North American and European tours. Mecija is excited, overcrowded tour van and all: "It's an evolving process, but we're all in it together!"

BRIONY SMITH



● **Fantasies** (Last Gang Records/Universal) is **Metric's** first new album in four years—and it might be the best yet. The NYC/Toronto-based quartet reached for an expanded sound and landed it with drums and driving rock guitars. The songwriting is more sophisticated, and there's a refreshing willingness to slow down and explore the grey areas between genres by playing with dreamy synth pop melodies and bringing Emily Haines' thoughtful lyrics to the forefront. ● **The Josh Reichmann Oracle Band**, the latest combo from the former front man of Tangiers and Jewish Legend, conjures up a whole new musical maelstrom on its first full-length album, *Crazy Power* (Paper Bag Records). The band puts a thoroughly modern spin on the '70s glam of T.Rex and David Bowie before venturing into its own funky-psychedelic sonic spheres dominated by drums, keyboards and sax. ● The artists featured on the 10-song compilation *India* (Putumayo World Music/E1 Entertainment) showcase the range of the subcontinent's musical styles, from ghazal love songs (like the beautiful "Vo Kuch" by Indo-Canadian singer Kiran Ahluwalia) and devotional salutations to Bollywood pop tunes. The album also follows those styles as they travel around the world and collide—in endlessly interesting ways—with Western electronics and song forms. **MARY DICKIE**