

## DEAR TOUR DIARY

BY ELLEN CAMPESINOS!



For the majority of my band life, I have been in committed relationships. The “feast or famine”

nature of this existence finally came to a head last Christmas when a Google Calendar incident cemented my decision to become a single lady. I finally realized I could not do both “band” and “relationship”.

Don't get me wrong. I did try to be an expert at maintaining love from ever-changing distances. I mainly did it with Skype as I scabbled around hotel lobbies and shouted into my MacBook, “You've frozen again!” I apologized for missing birthdays or anniversaries. I got so used to long-distance communication that I tried to convince myself it was actually beneficial for the type of person I was, and I stopped noticing the canyon-size gaps between myself and past partners when I returned home.

So now, for the first time in two years, I am both single and on tour—a perfect place for focusing on the “You-without-a-significant-other” period. I will have to rely on cheering myself up when I feel homesick in a random lodge in Tucson, Arizona, or believe my bandmates when they tell me it doesn't matter that I tucked my skirt into my knickers for onstage performances. And actually, I'm looking forward to it.

Ellen Campesinos! is the bass player for Los Campesinos!, currently on tour.



## BEERS WITH THE BAND THOSE DARLINS

Over drinks at Chicago's Schubas, I realize that Nikki, Jessi, and Kelley of Those Darlins share a lot—a poppy countryish rocknroll band; a house in the Tennessee college town of Murfreesboro; and, of course, a stage surname.

No, they're not sisters, they assure me. But they're practically related.

“It's like you're married when you're in a band,” quips Nikki, who plays baritone ukulele. “You have a life together.”

The trio, all from different pockets below the Mason-Dixon line, bonded through dance parties and porch jam sessions in Murfreesboro before they formed Those Darlins.

“It was a real relaxed, silly hillbilly feeling,” Nikki explains. “Everyone'd come hang out and drink beer at our bizarre little shanty.”

It's not long before we discuss the F word—do the Darlins get down with calling themselves “feminists”.

Jessi cracks up suddenly. “You know what's funny? People make this huge deal out of our armpit hair!”

I take a look—the three are going au naturel.

“We don't even talk about it,” Jessi goes on. “I think it's our way of saying, ‘We're feminists, and we're normal just like you.’ You don't have to be a freak of nature to be a feminist. Dolly Parton, Loretta Lynn, they were feminists.”

Damn straight. My religion on Facebook is “Dollywood,” I admit. But do they like being called a “girl band”?

They roll their eyes in unison.

“One time I saw a listing that referred to us as a ‘girl-only band,’” Kelley tells me. “For some reason, it's still okay to do that.”

BY NONA WILLIS ARONOWITZ • PHOTO BY LYDIA GOOLIA