

ELLE

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ELLEMUSTHEAR



WHAT THE FOLK?

INTRODUCING FREAK FOLK—NO PEACE SIGNS OR FLOWER POWER REQUIRED

Let's start by saying that none of it is exactly *SexyBack*. But freak folk, a newish genre that gets its name as much from its similarities to the psychedelic strummings of the '60s as from its all-around kooky players, is catching on. Their long hair, acoustic guitars, and pastoral lyrics make them seem sort of Woodstocky. Just know that they also dress in drag, can beatbox, and have played shows for Chanel and Jimmy Kimmel. Below, our guide to getting your freak on:

Joanna Newsom One of the first to earn the freak-folk label with her 2004 debut album, *The Milk-Eyed Mender*. Two years later, she released *Ys*, and critics from *Pitchfork* to *Time* magazine hailed it as one of the best records of 2006. On it, she melds the harp (yes, seriously) with her impish, high-pitched voice.

CocoRosie An off-kilter sister duo whose latest album, *The Adventures of Ghosthorse & Stillborn*, out this month, proves hip-hop beats paired with breathy, choirlike choruses can be highly addictive.

Devendra Banhart The Jack White of freak folk was born in Houston and raised in Venezuela, which accounts for his salsa-tinged take. The songs on 2005's *Cripple Crow* are simple, celebratory, and as close to balladeering peaceniks of the '60s as freak folk gets.

Vetiver Fronted by guitarist Andy Cabic, this band started out as a collective of musicians that sometimes included stalwarts Banhart and Newsom. Their second album, 2006's *To Find Me Gone*, is languid and homespun—and perfectly weird. Just like it should be.—KYLA JONES

