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She dares listeners not to dance

By Nicole Pensiero
For The Inquirer

Like the name of the festival she's playing tonight, for blues-rock singer/instrumentalist Grace Potter it truly is all about the music.

"I'm living it, man," Potter said by phone this week. "There is nothing else for me."

Weaned on everything from Little Feat to Led Zeppelin, the 23-year-old Vermont native - who sounds far younger in conversation than she does on vinyl - is passionate about beltin' it out for a crowd, preferably one that doesn't yet know her music.

"I don't think you can come to my show and not want to dance," Potter said. "Even people who have no idea who we are get into it."

It has been a quick climb this past year for Potter and crew, having gone from house band at the same Burlington, Vt., nightclub that launched Phish's career to touring with Dave Matthews and Taj Mahal. Potter and her three-member band, the Nocturnals, are out plugging their self-produced CD, *Nothing but the Water*, an earthy, enticing mix of blues, rock, Americana and gospel.

"I grew up listening to my parents' record collection from the '60s and '70s, not realizing the impact it would have on me," Potter said. "Those influences are all over the record."

Recorded in one week, *Nothing* has an organic, uncluttered vibe that puts the focus on Potter's honey-and-whiskey vocals, whether tackling a sassy, organ-driven breakup number ("Toothbrush and My Table") or lingering over the lyrics of the jarring a cappella title track.

Onstage, Potter jumps between her Hammond B-3 organ (on which she's a virtuoso) and guitar (which she learned to play only last year but now considers her favorite instrument).

"That's part of the fun for me, getting to play both," Potter said. "And the guys in the band are the best. Our guitarist, Scott [Tournet], is the next Jimmy Page. You heard it here first."

If You Go

More than 40 acts on three stages, including a Kids Corner stage. Gates open at 5 p.m. today, noon Saturday and Sunday at Wiggins Park, Mickel Boulevard and Riverside Drive, Camden. Tickets: \$10 tonight; \$18 Saturday or Sunday; \$5 children 2 to 12 any day. Information: 1-800-565-9976, www.xpn.org. Blankets and lawn chairs permitted. Times given are approximate.

Other acts worth checking out:

Recently regrouped glam-rockers **the New York Dolls**, who just released their first album in 30 years. Led by the always entertaining David Johansen, the Dolls continue their tradition of putting humor and some good old raunch into their rock-and-roll. 10 tonight.

Brandi Carlile, the festival's other "it" girl (beside Grace Potter), will perform songs from her breakout debut, a stirring collection of pop-rock numbers that showcase her alternately aching and soaring vocals. 7:10 p.m. Sunday.

Texas-based singer-songwriter **Alejandro Escovedo** was sidelined a few years back with hepatitis C, but he has returned with a vengeance in the last year, touring frequently and releasing a potent new CD, *The Boxing Mirror*. 4:40 p.m. Sunday.

The **Yonder Mountain String Band** is a bluegrass jam band with a rock-and-roll heart. Topflight musicians all, they combine banjo, bass, mandolin and guitar into a rousing mix that genre-jumps with surprising ease. 7 tonight.

Philly fave Mike "Slo-Mo" Brenner leads the hip-hop steel-guitar band also known as **Slo-Mo**, which has teamed with local rapper **Mic Wrecka** to kick things up a notch with hearty doses of funk and soul. 2:45 p.m. Saturday.

Longtime 'XPN favorite **Citizen Cope** is a musical mixologist, melding mellow hip-hop beats with pop and new-school blues. His latest album, *The Clarence Greenwood Recordings*, has earned raves for its socially conscious jams and low-lit love songs. 9 p.m. Saturday.

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Grace Potter and the Nocturnals, 5:45 p.m. today on the River Stage at the WXPN All About the Music Festival, Wiggins Park, Mickel Boulevard and Riverside Drive, Camden. Tickets: \$10. Phone: 1-800-565-9976.

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