

# Analogue

Issue 2. November 2007



BACKTRACKS TALKS TO

**ARCADE FIRE // LCD SOUNDSYSTEM //**

**SOULWAX // ANDREW BIRD // KEVIN DREW //**

**O'DEATH // KING TUT // ASOBI SEKSU // YOU'RE ONLY MASSIVE // CARIBOU**



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# EDITORIAL

Issue 2 was a struggle to say the least. Publishing isn't easy at all but here at Analogue we don't give up too easy. We've made more room for illustrations and also squeezed in as many interviews as we could. Interviews by email, phone and in person- we tried it all so that we

could ask the questions you want to hear the answers to.

The response to Issue 1 was phenomenal so thanks to everyone for the kind words.

Hope you like Issue 2...

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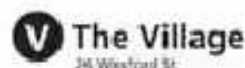
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The notorious, euphoria-inducing Belgian band Soulwax continued to do what they do best and destroyed an Ambassador full of people's inhibitions with their pounding remixes from their new release, *Most of the Remixes*.

Re-workings of LCD Soundsystem, Robbie Williams and Felix da Housecat ignited an already charged crowd into strobesque movements while we pogo-ed in unison. Wincing as sweat-filmed skin peeled on and off my own, arbitrary elbows from some blur in the crowd jabbed the air and stilettos haphazardly syringed my feet, I took a moment to look fondly back on more hygienic times when only a little while earlier I had been sitting comfortably upstairs in Soulwax's changing room. Greeted by the Dewaele brothers, core members of the band, they wasted no time in making us feel welcome, offering plenty of champagne, beer and other various food and drink littering the room. Displaying equal benevolence with their time, I got a chance to ask them a few questions...

**You've just released your new album – *Soulwax, most of the remixes...* and it has loads of different stuff on it from Kylie, LCD Soundsystem. Did you find it hard to get copyright clearance from anyone?**

David: Eh no, the reason we did the album with EMI, is because they own the rights for most of the artists.

Stephen: Yea it was really convenient 'cause most of the people used to be on Virgin or like Parlophone.

D: It was really easy.

S: They were like-'hey yeah, we got 15 other tracks you guys can remix.'

**So there wasn't anyone who you remixed who you couldn't put on this CD?**

D: No I mean they had a few, people who wouldn't pick up the phone, that kinda stuff and the next week they did, it wasn't kinda, nothing...

S: No big stories

D: Kinda boring

S: All boring stuff

*(Voice in the background: Make it sound exiting!)*

D: Oh yea, well ok, the Klaxons they were real assholes.

S: Those guys especially, and LCD were rude, they were just rude.

*(Same voice in background: LCD Shitsystem, that's what.)*

S: Ooh quote/unquote... And Justice they were being French to us, you know like, ooh I don't like your remix, Daft Punk they don't even acknowledge the fact that we exist.

**I hope you do the same to them.**

S: Yea I ignore them, I'm like Robot? No you're not! No actually it was all really easy, there's a couple that we didn't put on there, very few, but there's one from a Mexican Band called Moderato which we did a couple of years ago which we really liked. But there's only... we didn't have enough... there wasn't physically enough time on one c.d. to put it on and it was also a really fast tempo so we didn't put it on there. That would have been one that we would have really loved to put on there, but which we skipped but maybe now, some kid will put it on a blog and it's out there...

**So you're not going to be playing it tonight, it's not going to be included?**

S: The Mexican song? It's really hard 'cause we don't understand what he's saying, we actually did a remix and we completely did the remix without knowing what he's saying but they love it. So I guess we kinda made some sense, cause we

cut up his vocals a little bit but there's no way, I could sing that cause I don't even understand what he's saying, so we're not playing that one, maybe we should if we go to South America, it's a really good idea...

D: I hate to be the theoretical analyst but Mexico is really

Central America not South America.

S: Yea you're right.

**Have any of the artists you remixed responded to your mixes?**

D: Well I guess 75%, or maybe 72% of the people that are on the album are friends of ours...(thinks) maybe 68%.

S: How bout 23?

D: And you know we know them personally so, either they were...either they didn't tell us honestly what they thought of it and they just lied, but most of them said they liked it.

**Do you feel more pressure to do a good remix because you know them?**

D: Yea it's tough, it's tougher for... there's a few that we don't know but we love, like Daft Punk and when we got to get asked to do DJ Shadow we were like 'ooh Shadow!' and it's tough. It's tough because there's other people like say Robbie, who we like but we didn't really care about the track, it's easier to remix a track that you don't really like.

**Cause you feel like you can improve it?**

S: Or fuck it up.

**Or have a different take on it?**

S: Yea yea, yea, but Shadow was hard cause, like we said yes, but we listened to the track and we were like 'ahhh, this is like really slow, folky' and I mean it's nice when it's someone you really respect but it's easier when it's someone who you can be like 'ok let's see what we can do with, like Robbie Williams or the Sugababes or something like that.'

**Robbie Williams, Sugababes, they're kinda like mainstream, do you find that people dismiss mainstream artists today, how do you feel about it?**

D: Yea we do the same, yea booo, no I mean, why would you say today, yea we like mainstream. I mean we could get into a longer discussion about the mainstream but it used to be good, it used to be really good.

S: When was that?

D: I think, anytime between 1955 and ...

S: Long pause, long pause.

D: No I'm trying to think...89?

S: 89? So 91 the mainstream sucked.

D: No I'm just saying as a general, obviously there were good things in the 90's that were hits

S: Like Spaceman by Babylon Zoo, would that be great or would that be seen as...

Midnight Mike (to David) : What identifies the thing that made this great shift?

D: Money

S: Yea but that was always one of the biggest factors.

MM: Yea but more money being made

D: Yea so more shit being made

**Do you think artists feel obligated to make the same kind of records because they are under pressure from their labels not to deviate from that?**

D: It's not necessarily the labels, its just the whole... everyone's scared, everyone's just scared and I think that when the music industry was really booming say, 70's, I think that there was just like this spirit of yea lets just make a crazy record and we'll sell millions. People were more open-minded then they are now.

It's a shame and you know it's getting worse and worse 'cause 5 years ago there were still things in the mainstream that I think were great quality but to give a good example someone like Bowie today, he wouldn't get signed by any record company because he's too much of a risk. Even if it's good, it's potentially



good, it's too much of a risk and people don't take risks anymore.

S: (to Midnight Mike as he leaves to perform) Watch out for the mainstream!

MM: It'll take me away like a river

### **How do you approach remixing, how would you go about choosing the songs?**

S: Every remix has a different story and I think the ones that are the coolest are the ones where we decided to choose the song 'cause we liked the song and we played it, like the Gossip song. They asked us to do a remix and we never actually had time and when *'Standing in the way of Control'* came out we played it as DJ's but we found it was not fast enough and we wanted to make it sound bigger and we actually asked them can we remix it and that's a good way of doing it cause it's the reverse way but we knew what we wanted to do. It was clear from the beginning that was the thing that needed to be done. I think the Justice one is the same in the way that it went but then they're all different, each one has a different story, they're all like... its not like we... cause the Shadow one, like Dave says, and the Daft Punk one, you're kinda intimidated but that's it, but at the same time I respect as much James Murphy from LCD. I rate him as high as I rate Shadow and all these people but I know him so that makes it even harder for us, but I think we've learned to deliver what people want. In the beginning we used to do, say the Kylie one, we used to be a little more like stubborn and do rock versions but now I mean people just want to dance, want to go crazy, want to put fluorescent glasses on.

### **So you got Soulwax and 2 Many DJ's, do you feel like your backround with performing with instruments in Soulwax has helped you in djing and making the remixes?**

S: Yea definitely, I think the fact that we are all good at playing our stuff, we play instruments, we play live, like say tonight we play the remixes live which is pretty hard. Steve has to change his drum sounds every song, I have to manipulate the vocals to sometimes sing the vocals, like in the Gossip and like Kylie I can't do it so we found this thing where we can fuck them up live on stage but it's hard work. But I think the fact that, it's a little bit the same with LCD, we're all rock kids or punk kids and we're all used to playing in bands and we all know what its like to be on a bus and play in toilets so all of this is a holiday, it's a fucking picnic, its amazing, its really amazing and I do think we challenge ourselves to be more, I wouldn't say emergent but I think we have the same attitude as rock bands but we play it with synths, so we kinda change the guitars for synths although today we will use some guitars.

### **With 2 many djs and with your remixing, would that ever influence what you are doing with Soulwax?**

D: Well to be quite specific about it, all the remixes were made as Soulwax, but they were made with the intention of playing them as 2 many DJ's so not many 2 many DJ's would influence Soulwax.

### **So they're not completely separate?**

S: We don't separate them, we have to put lines, we have to do it sometimes cause otherwise we are like 'aahh' but it actually is the same thing for us, we DJ, we play in the band, we remix, and for us it's just another discipline.

### **As regards influences, you mention explicitly Ghent in the very long title of your album, it must be an influence on**

#### **you, or is it?**

D: The city? It's just where were from, I don't know, I mean obviously wherever you live is a massive influence on whatever but I don't know if it's tangible.

### **Do you think though if you grew up somewhere else, like has it got an especially good music scene or...**

D: Well first of all its apathetic, there's no way you can know, but yea we do think that we're kinda like a product of partially of where we live but I don't know, I don't know if we would have grown up in Poland it would have been different.

S: There's like 250,000 people, it's actually a small town but there are a lot of students and there's a lot happening, like it was the first place to have a techno label called RNS and I always think that a lot of people from the north of France and Holland always came to Ghent. It's in between cultures, it's always been an interesting place, but it's also never, it's also small, tiny which is the reason why, I think a lot of people haven't heard about it and maybe we kinda fucked it up. But it's such a small town, the more people from outside come in, the more people from there start thinking oh we're Paris and they're like, you're not. You can drive your bicycle from one end to the other and it's done.

### **What other influences would have affected you? Your dad being a dj?**

D: No

S; I don't think his DJing was an influence, I think the fact that all his records were in the house and we stole all of them, that was the biggest influence but it also meant that Dave and me used to go to gigs and concerts when we were young and we would be... it was a different upbringing to a lot of other kids. I do think we had access to all these things but then some other kids whose dads we know who were also DJ's ended up being dentists.

### **You said that heavy rock bands would have influenced Soulwax, but what would have influenced you as 2 many DJ's, dance-wise?**

S: I don't know. I do think as 2 Many DJs we were influenced by a lot of rock stuff, I don't think there's one particular dance band or people or DJ that really influenced us but I think it was a lot of things, but it wasn't only dance music so... and I do think as for Soulwax, I do think that we were influenced by Kyuss and Monster Magnet and all these bands. I do think that's always been our core, as rock bands we like rock music. I like 15% of dance music but there's 85% of bullshit. But I love...and it's something that really gets me going, I say the first Daft Punk record was really a big influence on us cause I think it showed you that you could make electronic music but have the same attitude as a punk record or like a metal record or something.

### **Is DJing just something that you fell into?**

S: The 2 many DJ's thing is just something that just happened but I mean we always DJ-ed before like when we had the band, and I started DJing with Steve and then he left for a girl to New York, it's always a girl, and then I asked Dave to DJ with me and we became 2 Many DJs and it's all because we were bored. Playing with the band we'd spend so much time doing nothing and we'd be like cool let's do...and we'd always be done at like 9 o' clock because we'd be doing support for some band, let's say for Muse or something like that, which was fun but you'd be there and be like cool what will we do now and you would always end up in a bar, at a club and be like hey, cool let's ask if we can DJ and that's how it all started.

It's really...there was no plan like hey let's do this, and I think we started playing a lot of stuff that people were either pissed

off about or like really happy about. People were like 'you can't play the Stooges you have to play house music', and then other people would be like 'yea you played the Stooges' and we'd be like 'okay cool'.





**Do you have any favourite remixes that you have done, or maybe a fairer question would be to ask if there are any remixes that you are especially proud of?**

S: No it always differs for us, but I think I really like the last one we did for LCD Soundsystem 'Get innocuous'. I really like that one, but that's not even on the album so therefore and I always think that it's going to be the last thing that we've done because it's newest. But it's fun like tonight to play live, it actually shows that we put a lot of work in there. Yea they're more than sometimes remixes, we have to re-write the whole song sometimes.

**So you're proud of this?**

S: I'm proud of this, I'm proud of night versions, of 2 Many DJs, of Soulwax, of stuff that we've done as production. I mean for me, I know it's all different for people but it's the same for me, everything is the same for me, it's all music and me having fun with it.

**Is there anything in particular that you play that everyone goes crazy for?**

S: When we DJ or when we play with the band? Cause they're very similar.

**Both.**

S: I think when we play with the band and we play the Justice remix they go crazy. They go really nuts.

**So do you enjoy it because of that?**

S: No actually no, its extra, its extra when you do something that you really like and people are like wow, you can tell some tracks really...but its good because you start understanding how crowds react to things, to dance music. A build up, a breakdown, it's a bit like the Pixies. You have the verse which is like the bass line, the drums, the vocals and then when the chorus comes in it like kicks in. Its like build, un-build, there's a structure to music, music has a definition and I think the more we play it the more we understand how it works. (laughs) We unlearn it then.

**Would you tend to follow these structures or do you try and experiment with different ideas?**

S: You mean in the studio? No I think we try and fuck it up but I mean there's always going to be a build up, a breakdown, something, but say in the Robbie one, we stretch it out, and people are going 'ahh give us something'. I think we're really really really...I mean someone told me that when you're on E or something and you come to see us DJ or something, like it really freaks you out because we play with it the whole time and apparently when you're on drugs its not good. I don't do that many drugs so I don't know, I've never done drugs in my whole self, but Steve once I think, was on a lot of drugs and he was like 'you guys are freaking me out'.

**Your tickets should have a warning on them...**

S; Yea it'd be a good warning though, (puts on a cheerful voice) 'Don't go when you're on drugs'

**What have you planned for Soulwax or 2 Many DJs or do you have another project on top of that?**

S: I think we're going to start making a new 2 Many DJs record and new Soulwax record soon, we're going to produce Tiga's record, we're releasing a new movie that we've done that Sam's been filming the last 2 years and actually there's footage of Electric Picnic, there's a lot of good stuff on it, it's good.

**And when is that coming out?**

S: I think it's going to be February.

**And is it going to be a DVD release?**

S: I think it will be DVD but we're going to try and film copies so we can play at venues and show it.

**That will be good.**

S: I know, I think it will too.

Words: Shauna O'Brien

Photo: Kate Southall



**There's something to the wild, barren landscapes of Scandinavia and Iceland that seem to breed such beautiful and jaw-dropping music. The faintest sound of dripping water or the howl of the northern wind seems to inspire their natives into creating cascading walls of sound that bring shivers down one's spine.**

Efterklang hail from tamer wilds of Denmark. They have, over the years, released numerous mini-albums and their accomplished debut *Tripper*. October saw the release of their second album *Parades*. Efterklang has its genesis in the wilds of the Danish countryside, on the island of Als to be precise. "It's extremely beautiful with many isolated places" local and lead singer Casper tells me. "It's pretty desolate. I wouldn't call it a cold place but it's extremely beautiful". Casper and fellow band members Mads and Rasmus grew up on Als but in time they felt this "common feeling that we were too big for this place". So they left for the bright lights and cosmopolitan charms of Copenhagen. Over a few years they met fellow band members Rune and Thomas and with the addition of visual artist Karim Ghahwagi, Efterklang was brought into this world.

Efterklang are an odd bunch. "We are just curious about sounds in general"- Casper explains -and it shows in their music. Combining an orchestra of violins and electronic beats with harmonious vocals, it's a rich mixture that tickles the mind and soothes the soul. "We don't think we can find music that won't fit into the Efterklang universe". Would that include such things as garbage cans? Well maybe. "If we find a nice soda can we would generally bring it home and start a song with that one". That's what constitutes the Efterklang universe, and what a universe it is. This is no ordinary band churning out album after album, it is more of an overall sensual experience. The eye is treated just as handsomely as the ear. "We are all fascinated by cinema and visuals in general and we use it in our music" Casper continues. "Sometimes it is nice to have a

visual to create a scene and story in picture to help to make the music. It felt like a natural way of making music". Because Karim is an integral part of the band all this works to a mesmerizing degree. "We would make the music and he would create the universe".

Debut album *Tripper* left many a critic salivating over its lavish musical texture. Comparisons with the aforementioned Sigur Ros made others sit up and take notice. The band embarked on a European tour and then it was time for a return to Copenhagen to create a new sensual experience. This time the band members decided to enlist an outsider to produce second album *Parades*. "We wanted to find a person who could deal with epic things, with both electronic and acoustics". The band decided on Darren Allison- the man behind such classics as My Bloody Valentine's *Loveless* and Spiritualized's *Space*. The result is an album more coherent and more lush than its predecessor.

Efterklang are not content with just music and visuals. They have taken it upon themselves to set up their own record label Rumraket. But what brought about this recent foray? "It was just a reaction" Casper tells me. "We wanted to release our first mini album and it was simply just nice to have a label behind it. We created it for that purpose and afterwards we used it to release some special editions of *Tripper*. Efterklang didn't think much would come of it but opinions and fate soon changed. One day an email popped into the Rumraket inbox from none other than Grizzly Bear asking the band to remix one of their tracks. The band said yes, one thing led to another and Grizzly Bear ended up on Rumraket. Score!

So Efterklang are a band that want to wrap you up in a warm, sensual duvet and treat you to an overall experience bordering on the religious. Go catch them in Dublin in Whelans on November 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Words: Conor O'Neill**



# You're Only Massive

Up and coming bands play gigs, do interviews where they extol the massive influence Bowie has had on their lives and how they want to make it big and tour America all while they glaze behind you to the mirror to fix their angular haircut or to-scraggly-to-be-natural hair. So when someone says to you "I really wanna play every county in Ireland!" and with such playful eagerness you sit up and take notice. Comprising of two bezzie mates Meabh and Megan they have combined a love of techno with the added spice of rap to create something, which stands out from the normal swathe of Irish bands.

Meabh and Megan are an odd mix. Meabh has spent many a month over the past few years in Berlin soaking up the avant garde lifestyle that city uniquely has to offer. She learnt how to MC and get into German rap there among other things. Megan on the other hand is still in school. In fact our interview was delayed so that Megan could finish supervised study! However as it is in all such cases it was a love of music and mutual friends that brought them together. They met each other at a friend's club in Waterford. "Our eyes met across a crowded room and we knew that it was meant to be!" jokes Megan on that fateful night. So a few weeks later in June just past they met up, found out they both loved the same music and so in Megan's bedroom over Alex Gopher's Motorcycle Clutch they decided to join forces and unleash You're Only Massive on the country.

So what are they like? Well think Chicks on Speed without the pretentiousness. Add in some rap and a bit of techno with some girly charm and there you have it. Since June they have toured relentlessly and although they haven't yet made it to every county in Ireland (I'm still dubious about Longford) they have garnered a lot of praise for their tongue in cheek style and

music. "we don't have the knowledge to sound like a proper group" Megan explains, "I don't really know how to mix properly so it [our sound] just sounds like this out of necessity". Nevertheless as a band live they seamlessly and flirtatiously rap over their favorite vinyls. Justice's Phantom becomes a saucy, slinky number while Alex Gopher is transformed into the whimsical 'SugarShake The Cool Away'. It seems all so odd. It shouldn't work but somehow it does and it has taken them around the country to Hard Working Class Heroes, Kilkenny, Dublin Fringe and em, Navan. "That was a really weird gig"

Megan giggles "Girls were coming up to us afterwards and going 'that was the best fun we've ever had!'" This all seems quite a lot for such a budding band, especially when Megan is busy preparing for the Leaving Cert. How does it all work? "Its kind of really hard actually" Megan tells me "not that it affects school really but in terms of playing gigs". A recent gig in Limerick on a school night resulted in Meabh roping in a friend to take the reigns for that show. So nothing will stop this band. A possible brief pause coming up to the exams will be followed by a massive burst of shows around the country. Gigs-a-plenty will occur. "We really like playing shitty little towns" Meabh eagerly tells me. So watch out Longford.

You're Only Massive may not be the most professional band out there. They may not think much about what they are doing or care about how they are perceived but as they rap in SugarShake The Cool Away "I'm tearing it up/Get ready to rave/Right here/Right now" it's all fun and games to Megan and Meabh. So catch them the next time they hit, um, Ballina.

**Words: Conor O'Neill**

**Photo: Kate Southall**

# Andrew Bird



The phone rings out a half dozen times. Finally, he answers, his voice soft and weary, unenthusiastic. Andrew Bird has been composing; fusing the seeds of separate musical ideas into an overarching medley. "This happens a lot, where I don't realise that I've been writing the same song in three different songs, so then I take the best parts of the song, see how they fit together and distill it into one song." Such compositional deconstruction is analogous to Bird's famed looped performances. The man adores playing live, "I pretty much hate the rest of the day", and has turned looping into an indispensable instrument of interpretation. Building a melody around a pizzicato rhythmic frame, he layers on more amorphous flourishes "a gaseous state, you can almost visualise in front of you", "this blob of sound that you're trying to carve and shape". "The songs have a certain amount of built-in room, I try to make sure I don't write songs that are gonna pin me down too much, but even the most conceptually overburdened arrangement, it's up to you to make it live and breathe again."

Working with percussionist Martin (Luther King Chavez) Dosh and multi-instrumentalist Jeremy Ylvisaker, Bird creates an

intricate vertical landscape, traversed by eerie whistled riffs and his trademark 'apocrypha' of concrete imagery.

He writes words "speaking in tongues", that "stand in to fill the crevices of the melody". Like Owen Pallett, Bird's loops build epic soundscapes and shivering violent crescendos. I ask him how much further such techniques can be pushed. "The variables keep multiplying, because I'm playing with Martin, who's also developed his own technique in a vacuum with drums and keyboards. But what's really cool, in the year and a half I've played with him, every time we get together we try something that kind of multiplies the possibilities. All three of us on stage, Jeremy Ylvisaker as well, we're all manipulating sound or noise and shaping it with looping." "I came up with my approach to it in my own vacuum. It was during a time when I was very isolated, and just saw it as a tool to turn a linear instrument into a vertical instrument. I just kind of stumbled into using it live. I was vaguely aware of people like [Ohio born singer songwriter] Joseph Arthur, Jon Brion and people like that using the same technology, but I think it's the ultimate tool for

someone who enjoys solitude. So it's interesting to see everyone using it in different ways."

Educated under the Suzuki method, playing violin from the age of four, Bird has developed an organic relationship to performance and composition. He describes Suzuki as "this prefab oral tradition", which turns children into natural musicians, "teaching kids to play music like they're learning a language, when they're really young and their brains are still developing" but one that leaves them ill-equipped to deal with the formal elements and pressures of the classical world.

"Suddenly there's this rude awakening when you're thirteen or fourteen and you're supposed to play in an orchestra and read music. That was kind of a nightmare. It was very competitive, I couldn't read music at all, but I could learn entire concertos by ear." Bird almost burnt out during his early twenties, "playing eight to ten hours a day trying to prove that I could make a living as a musician." Surmounting the experience, he made a conscious decision to never again allow a performance to feel empty, "like a wasted moment." "Whenever I'm in a musical situation and it starts to feel jammy or futile, I get really uncomfortable. So every moment I'm making music, I'm putting a lot of pressure on myself to make it 'musical'."

With a head full of melodies ("One thing I never worry about, is that drying up. It'll happen as a result of being alive"), Bird is sceptical of semantics; "Words are trickier, words fill you with self doubt". Lately he's been seeking a way to escape language entirely, looking for "some sort of springboard into just making sounds with my mouth". So far his experiments have made themselves known in coruscating logos, lyrics that bring to mind the tongue twisting impenetrability of poly-rhythmic naturalismo nymphet, Joanna Newsom. On this year's 'Armchair Apocrypha' LP, his eighth studio album and third solo outing, lyrics drift from references to neuroscience 'they'll fight for your neural walls and plasticities' [Plasticities], 'as if you lack the proper chemicals to know' [Armchairs], to subtle scientific wordplay, 'despite what all his studies had shown / what's mistaken for closeness / is just a case of mitosis' [Imitosis]. Pitchfork's review speaks of the album exhibiting a distrust of science and psychology, but I find here more a fascination with uncertainty, a yearning for unknowable things. Bird insists that any such coherence is emergent, not a deliberate commentary or theme. "I have words that sort of stand in to fill the crevices of the melody and I just wait till something starts to make a little more sense or seems emotionally true. But more or less the beginning of the process is not concerned with meaning or

intention at all. At the end of the process I'm like 'now I see what I was talking about'. I find the common threads. People have suggested doing an instrumental record, and for some reason the words feel really important none the less. One gives the other a reason to exist. Armchair Apocrypha, I guess the Apocrypha part for me has revealed itself to be about the origin of ideas being a little more dubious."

'Apocrypha' is an explosion of fury in contrast to Bird's last, more experimental record, the wonderfully titled 'Mysterious Production of Eggs' ("a nod toward 'Where do these ideas come from?' The mysteriousness of the creative process"). The album's didactic melodrama grew out of the process of live collaboration with Dosh, "I went from a couple of years of playing solo and kind of more subtle textured stuff, to playing with a drummer again, and I was doing songs from 'Eggs' like 'Tables and Chairs' where I sing 'We were tired of being mild'

and the song became so extroverted compared to the record, and I heard the record for the first time in a while, and I heard that line, and I thought, well Jesus if I'm so tired of being mild, why do I sound so restrained? So I've tried to get closer to that kind of fever, that kind of intensity, that comes over me in a live

show". According to Bird there are two species of album and "You're going to either make a decidedly living room or bedroom type record, which is carefully balanced and measured, or you're going to make a live type record, that goes for it." Despite his protests to the contrary, 'Apocrypha' manages to scupper such divides, seeming both energetic and perfectly controlled. The record mixes the scratchy veracity of Buckley's 'Sketches' LP, with the tightly measured pop of a Ziggy-Era Bowie album, and the unselfconscious classical flourishes of Final Fantasy.

A love of touring has insulated Bird somewhat from the fear currently coursing through the recording industry. "My bread and butter has been playing live, and I've always written off the recorded product - never expecting to see anything come of that - except being this reason to tour and play live." I ask about rumoured plans to toy with the visual aspect of performance, a favoured tactic amongst independent musicians of all means these days. Bird's reply is typically understated. "We're dabbling in a little bit in the projection thing lately, but it's a different way of experiencing music and it can be slightly less personal. Really what I'm trying to do is to think of the stage as a thirty five mill' frame, and how are you going to fill that frame with as much cool functional stuff as possible. I've been working with a lot of artists in Chicago to make the actual instruments on stage visually interesting." One such practically elegant gizmo is Bird's twirling double headed Victrola speaker, built by Chicago sculptor and instrument maker Ian Schneller's 'Specimen Products'. Despite a fear of overwhelming the performance, Bird plans to extend such visual elements, "We're trying to use projections as just an interesting way of casting light." Fans in Ireland had the pleasure of Bird's visuals at his November 3rd show in Tripod, but missed out on the spinning 'Janus Horn'. "Right now I'm trying to figure out how to get that stuff over seas, it's really sad but it's almost impossible at this stage. But yeah, I really enjoy employing really creative people. It's been my diversion, I don't like to hang out with other musicians, I like to hang out with visual artists mostly and to collaborate with them on stuff." Such a collaboration was evident on 'Eggs', where Bird worked with musician and artist Jay Ryan to build narrative illustrations for each song. "Jay's a good friend of mine, and we just hung out and joked around, and he was just sketching while we were talking and that was it. I love it when things are that easy."

Moments of 'Eggs' were reminiscent of the swing-influenced Jon Brion cut of Fiona Apple's Extraordinary Machine LP.

Perhaps this touch of bassy waltz was a shadow of Bird's first brush with fame, collaborating with North Carolina 1920's revivalists 'Squirrel Nut Zippers'. Off his own pressings Bird had made a habit of guesting on releases as various as Ani DiFranco's 2005 'Button Down' and Neko Case's early 'Canadian Amp' EP. "Every Winter seems to be the season for side projects, and a more collaborative phase. So I'm starting to concoct different ideas to pull me out of my own universe and play other people songs. I like getting little homework assignments now and then. Even if I'm like not really into it at first, like getting asked to cover that Bob Dylan song for Mojo a year ago... I like to pick the most elemental songs I can find, that don't really have too much of a stamp on them, and then totally rethink the whole thing."

*Andrew Bird's latest album Armchair Apocrypha is available from all good music sellers. He is currently touring Europe.*

**Words: Gareth Stack**

**Illustration: Sarah Jane Comerford**

# Stars

**'In Our Dressing Room, before the Show (but after the War)'- Ailbhe Malone speaks to Stars about Hitler, Hooligans, and Henry V...**

'We don't want people to feel cool while listening to our music, we don't want them to know what cool is. We want to be able to take people out of their self-consciousness and wrap them up in the moment', Torquil Campbell, the lead singer of Stars, explains. Stars classify themselves as 'melodramatic popular song', an epithet which they are proud to carry. 'I hate the term rock and roll, it seems so brash...I'd have to wear more leather, and tighter pants, and I get sweaty enough on stage as it is', says Campbell, who, clad in Converse, woollen blazer and loose jeans, dresses more like a friendly uncle than a behemoth of the ever-growing Canadian Indie scene. Perhaps the most

striking thing about Campbell is his earnestness, his belief in the ability of one song to affect someone profoundly, to the extent that he won't let any Stars tracks be used in advertisements- 'We felt it'd cheapen the song for someone who bought the album or whatever. You know, to be sitting down there and have this unwanted connection with a commercial.' When I ask how he justified allowing two Stars tracks to be used on The O.C. soundtrack ('Ageless Beauty' and 'Your Ex-Lover Is Dead'), he smiles and mumbles about how at least 'they were 'connected to a narrative in some way, although it was a pretty simplistic narrative', while agreeing that the exposure generated by the songs' inclusion didn't do the band any harm. Though Campbell has long since waved goodbye to adolescence, it's easy to see why Stars' aesthetic appealed to the producers of the Californian uber-soap. Lyrically his obsessions are the same as those of the O.C.'s core audience- namely heartbreak, heartache and the search for true love. Indeed, one of the main themes running through Stars' music (and especially the new record 'In Our Bedroom after the War') is the idea of halves, of there being someone out there for everyone. 'I mean, Hitler and Eva Braun, right? Even if you're a psychotic mass murderer, you can still feel passion and love for someone. I guess that really comes through on 'Barricades'. I was reading this book about football hooligans and thought it'd be fun to write a piano ballad about these two football fans that fell in love. I don't think many people got the joke though.' Even the structure of the group endorses Campbell's underlying fondness of symmetry- he shares lead vocals with Amy Millan, who lends a tender, bittersweet edge to Campbell's sometimes biting and harsh lyrics. 'Amy's like the glue that holds the band together. If someone doesn't like the band, it's normally because of me.'

Campbell wears his influences on his sleeve, happily citing Donny Walker, Curtis Mayfield and Marvin Gaye as musical heroes, along with The Smiths. "'Panic' by The Smiths brings me right back to being 14...'The Smiths are probably my favourite band ever.' The Smiths' effect on Campbell is blatant, not least while he is waving around bunches of flowers on stage during the band's gig at The Button Factory later that evening.



Campbell shares Morrissey's love of theatrics (not surprising, given that Campbell has acted as Henry V, and in 'Sex and the City', among other television shows) and recounts how, at a show in Montréal, he once enlisted his Shakespearian actor father's help to open a set- 'My dad's this real old Shakespearian actor, he's like, 85, and he does the intro to 'Your Ex-Lover is Dead', and we were at this show in Montréal once, and we thought it'd be great if he could do that live, 'cause we normally just leave out the spoken bits when we play a live show. We got it all set up so that he wouldn't have to bother with security or anything, he could just come in from the car, say the piece on stage, and then leave again. So, he comes onto the stage, in a cloud of smoke, wearing his coat and all this, and he comes up to the mic, and says in this deep British accent- 'When there's nothing left to burn-', and all the kids in the crowd went mental, screamin' and shoutin'. Then he puts up his hand to silence them, and continues '-you've got to set yourself on fire'. He comes straight off the stage, and he's so overwhelmed with the response that he goes straight up to a female friend of mine, and kisses her full on the lips, then goes on to the car, where my mother was waiting for him.'



Campbell, as is apparent from the above anecdote, heartily endorses collaborative work. He records with Broken Social Scene, and earlier incarnations of Stars have featured Feist and Emily Haines (Metric). While they are not averse to enlisting big-name producers and mixers (such as Joe Chiccarelli (Frank Zappa, Etta James) who mixed *'In Our Bedroom after the War'*), Stars employ an egalitarian attitude towards their collaborations. For example, the Smashing Pumpkins-influenced video for *'Stay Tonight'* was made by Israeli student Jonathan Vardi as part of a school project and sent to the band on spec. The band liked the video so much that not only did they keep and use it, but they have also employed Vardi to direct the video for *'The Night Starts Here'*- the next single off the album.

To quote from Torquil's recent anti-Pitchfork Myspace rant, Stars seek 'to speak about life and love and death and sex and NOT stare up our own asses in a state of ironic detachment', a sentiment which was exhibited during their October 6<sup>th</sup> set. As the crowd stood in the refurbished, re-carpeted, new-car-smelling Button Factory, Campbell implored them 'it feels a little sterile in here, feel free to throw up', exemplifying the band's ethos of emotion over image, sentiment over statement and reality over rock and roll.

*'In Our Bedroom after the War'* is out now on Arts and Crafts.

# Four Girls, Eight Hands and A Musical Paro

**Hildur Ársælsdóttir from Amiina on playing by the rules, instrument-swapping and Sigur Ros.**

'I think a lot of normal stuff influences us, like food and textures of things, and handcraft, stuff like that.' No matter how *Eyebrowy* deem to classify Sigur Ros, 'pretentious' is not a word one could ever use in conjunction with Amiina. The group, comprising of Hildur Ársælsdóttir, Edda Rún Ólafsdóttir, Maria Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir, and Sólrún Sumarliðadóttir, originally worked as a classical string quartet before recording with Sigur Ros (on *Ágætis byrjun* and *Takk*) and finally releasing their first solo album *Kurr* in 2007. The quartet's classical background is apparent, a fact which Hildur readily acknowledges- 'Classical music- our education- has influenced us a lot. That's the pillar, if you can say so. That's where we come from, that's a really big part.' Whilst they embrace their classical training, they admit that, as a style, it is too constrictive- 'We come from a classical background where, you know, you're not supposed to decide a lot of stuff for yourself, you're supposed to play by the rules. When we met the guys (Sigur Ros) we started doing more creative work and we just found it fascinating.'

Though Amiina are quick to stress that they are a separate group, and not a side project of Sigur Ros, the effect that Sigur Ros has had on them is undeniable. Hildur speaks about the group as if she was a 16 year old girl describing her first

boyfriend. 'When we started working with them we realised that you can do whatever you want, that there are no rules. It would appear that ever since then, Amiina *have* been doing whatever they want. Their music mimics that of Sigur Ros in that it has no lyrics- 'It's much more natural for us to write songs without lyrics, because of our background. We're so used to inter-weaving melodies and that kind of focus on nuances and sound rather than lyrics. I think all of us kind of, when we listen to music, we don't listen to the lyrics and remember them. We listen a lot more to other stuff, other factors in the music. So, it was something we didn't even think about, it was just so natural for us to do instrumental music.'- but it has more drive, and an inherent sense of fun that their fellow Icelanders lack.

In keeping with their organic ethos, Hildur explains that- 'when we create the song, we're not really thinking of how to perform it live, so we use whatever instrument we want, not really thinking about it in practical terms. So when we then do live versions, arrangements, sometimes we have to sit down and discuss how we're going to do it, practically. We would really love to have more hands than eight, but we don't, so we have to figure out a way to make things work. It's kind of our



choreography.' Watching Amiina perform is a singularly serene experience. It is clear Amiina are at ease in their current musical territory, during concerts they glide around the stage whilst swapping instruments at a ferocious pace- sometimes mid-song.

The group members dress similarly in long, pretty dresses and they alternately bob, sway and nod to the music as they play. Alarmingly self-contained, even when playing more upbeat tracks such as '*ammaelis*', Amiina act like they're all in on a big exciting secret- which they might, just might, let the audience in on. Hildur giggles that- 'We like cosy little festivals. We're not really fans of the big festivals with all the loud drunk people rolling around. We're more into cosy indoor things.' They shun projections and showy visuals, stating that - 'We think there are so many details happening during the show, just in the performance. At the moment, we think that may be enough to look at. I think that's what at least some people like about us,

that there's always something to watch.'

Quietly, Amiina are still building up their musical artillery - 'We *REALLY* want to learn to play the Theremin. We have one and we're trying to practise, but it's hard to learn. That's one of the





instruments that we've been dreaming about for a long time. I'd also like to learn to play the clarinet, that's a really fascinating instrument.' Every member of the group is a multi-instrumentalist, and their list of instruments ranges from Viola, to Glassophone, to Musical Saw. The latter instrument shines on *'Rugla'*, transforming the melody from prosaic to hypnotic. Further on in the album, *'Hilli'* swings gently by, allowing for Japanese influences, whistling, and ethereal vocals to happily co-exist within a waltz tempo. Lead single *'Seoul'* showcases a Gideon Harp and Service Bells duet over the shadow of a Korg drumline. Amiina's musical fearlessness seems to stem from, finally, being able to do exactly what they want to do. Hildur agrees-'We always had it in the back of our heads this idea of doing something together that was our own thing, and we didn't really have the time to do it until a few years ago-', before mischievously adding that- 'It's much more fun making stuff up on your own than doing what people tell you to do.'

**Words: Ailbhe Malone**

**Illustration: Zoe Manville**

**Spirit If...Analogue presents Kevin Drew on collaboration, implosions, and meeting one's heroes.**

Broken Social Scene have been keeping a secret from the world. Since *You Forgot It In People* established the band as indie pop champions in 2002 they have appeared a decentralized band, a band with no real leader, no chief songwriter, nobody in the driving seat. Sure, that guy with the shaggy beard was always at the front singing, smiling, and spontaneously hugging audience members. However, the recent release of *Broken Social Scene Presents: Kevin Drew-Spirit If* has destroyed a myth; Kevin Drew has been the beating heart and driving force of the collective from the start.

**This is your third time in Ireland, do you feel you get a good reception over here?**

I think so... Stars were here, Feist was here, we all help each other out in getting press and whatever.

**You once said "We want to affect audience's hearts and minds with honesty". Do you draw a line on what's too personal in your lyrics?**

I don't. I never really have. I never really wanted to take any personae to protect myself from myself on stage. I really wanted to get the people who could relate and take it to their own lives. I never wanted to tell personal stories, it wasn't really a goal of mine, but I also didn't want to hide anything from anyone who was giving me the time of day. And I never really have.

**So you find it pretty cathartic writing songs?**

Yeah I don't really "write", I just speak my mind, and I did that especially with this album. I didn't write any lyrics, except for a couple, just made it up as we went along, and then we ended up keeping them.

**How did the idea of the *Presents* series come about?**

It kinda came at the end. Bernard (Canning, co-founder of Broken Social Scene) was making his own record, and I made this record with Ohad and Charlie (Benchetrit and Spearin, also of Do Make Say Think). We were wondering what to do because I made it as a solo record, and over the space of a couple of years everybody came in eventually. Once you have certain people come in, well, you're like "I have to get everybody in". These are my friends, and these are the people I make music with. And then once we chose the selection of what was going to be on the record we saw that some of these were band-written songs, songs that Ohad and Charlie had written, like *Big Love* which I just sang on top off. I started to see that it wasn't so much my solo record anymore, but my stream of consciousness solo record. So we thought we'd start this *Presents* series 1. because Bernard had made his record, and 2. we didn't want to veer off all the work we had done already with Bren, and our friends and this family we'd built up with Social Scene. And also because we have so much fucking music that we never know what the fuck to do with! So if we had another system to put things out, everything was great then.

What I think you'll see more is more soundtrack work, or maybe we pull together a whole bunch of B-sides from everybody's records and (re-do those with a Broken Social Scene line-up). And also, maybe we find some old guy who no-one ever heard of and he had these 16-track recordings of

him and a banjo and I don't know... Just somehow take it to the next level. It's right there above you! (He points to a Buena Vista Social Club poster). That's it! That's it, man!

**Spiral Stairs and J Mascis (Pavement and Dinosaur Jr. members) are on the new record. Do you think they'll contribute again?**

Yeah! I love both those guys now. I became friends with those two guys over the last few years.

**How did that come about?**

Both relationships were good men coming together, boyfriend-boyfriend. Scott (Spiral Stairs) was sweet, because I heard he was playing some of the *You Forgot It In People* record. I got that phone call, you know, the "DUDE! THE GUY FROM FUCKIN' PAVEMENT'S PLAYING YOUR SONGS!" one. Then he asked to open for us in Atlanta, because he was on tour with Preston School Of Industry. So we met the Preston guys, they were all sweet, sweet guys, and then I stayed in touch with him, and then we stayed in touch more and we hung out in Australia when I was over. And we pretty much stayed in touch since. J Mascis was the same- We played with him, we met him, we stayed in touch and we did some shows together. They say don't meet your heroes, but you know what if they're fun and sweet...

**Get them in your band!**

Yeah! Exactly!

**And do you think the roster's going to keep expanding?**

I think it's going to expand, increase, implode. I don't know. All I know is I'm in it for life, and I'm excited to see what happens.

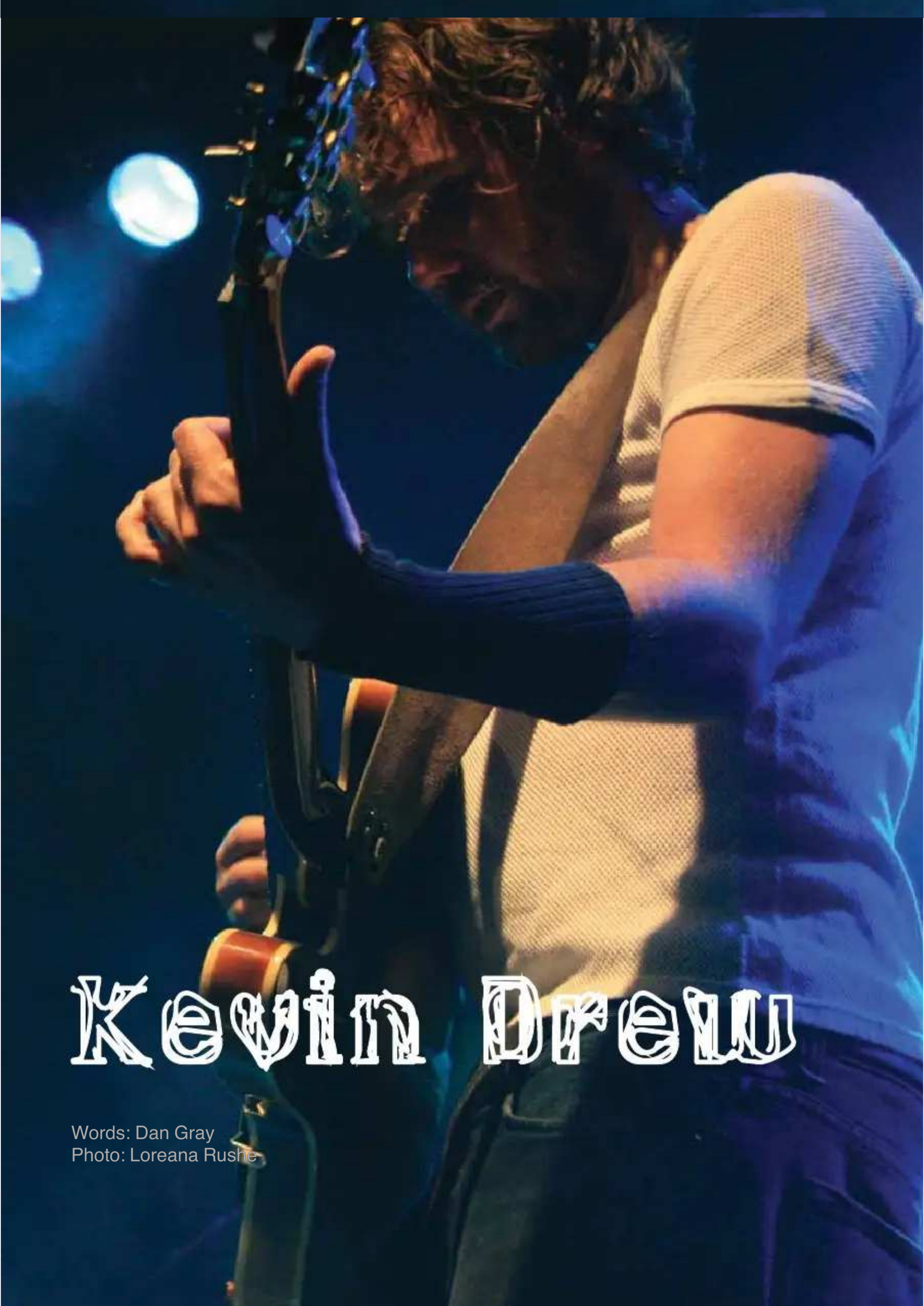
**Who would be your dream guest to get in then?**

There's a lot of people I'd have liked to play with on this record, but I didn't know them, and I didn't want to reach out and ask them to play on it, in terms of I wanted to make this a really personal record, and wanted to know everybody who was doing it. There was only one person I didn't know, and that was Tom Cochrane, but at the same time I knew he was the right choice. I grew up listening to his music as a kid, he's a Canadian rock icon. I wanted to bring him in because nobody would've been expecting me to, and I wanted to throw in a bit of juxtaposition.

**When do you think the next record will be released? There was a big gap between *Spirit If* and *Broken Social Scene*.**

It's pretty quick, it's Brendan's and it'll be out in Spring. Then I think we'll have the soundtrack work. We have shit we haven't listened to in two years, on a hard drive somewhere. But also, we don't take things so seriously, we might just release digital and vinyl releases from now on.

During the gig later that night, it's obvious that some of the legend status of his album's guests have been rubbing off on him. Commanding the stage, the band, and the crowd, he echoes Bruce Springsteen spearheading an E Street onslaught. The band even manage to come out the right side of a tongue-in-cheek U2 cover. It's a testament to Drew's charm and charisma that the 1000-plus die-hard indie heads comprising the crowd all sing along with him. Broken Social Scene's big secret is out.



# KEVIN DREW

Words: Dan Gray  
Photo: Loreana Rushe

# NEW YOUNG PONY CLUB: They Can Give You What You Want- As Long As It Involves Bon Jovi or a Seven-Inch Record

By Ailbhe Malone

They may have been nominated for the Mercury Music Award (for 'Fantastic Playroom'), but New Young Pony Club's musical preferences remain firmly rooted in the past. Andy Spence, N.Y.P.C.'s guitarist, notes with pride that 'I picked up a 7 inch version of Human League's 'Love Action' yesterday- that was pretty cool.', while going on to muse that 'I like the 7-inch thing; it reminds us of the 80s, which is a period that we love musically.' Indeed, the band's fascination with tacky, sweaty, sexy pop music is illuminated by the song they choose to sing at Karaoke- 'The last time we played in Dublin, we headed out for Karaoke afterwards and did a killer version of 'You Give Love a Bad Name' by Bon Jovi. We got the entire room singing it!

While New Young Pony Club embrace their Nu-Rave moniker more heartily than other similar bands do, they are by no means musically exclusive. They describe themselves as 'fresh, fun, exciting, flirty, edgy, punky and poppy', and while 'shameless' may not be the right adjective to use, as long as music is involved, their interest can be roused. It's difficult not to appreciate the wide-ranging musical capabilities of the group, though they shrug off notions of virtuosity,

laughing that - 'seriously, we'll do anything, we're slags!' Andy composed the music to the Tibetan film 'Dreaming Lhasa', because of a fortuitous coincidence- the directors were his landlords. 'They had heard the stuff that I did with N.Y.P.C. and really liked it, so they asked me to compose the soundtrack. They were lovely so I said yes. As landlords they were really nice, they never raised the rent in 7 years.' From film soundtracks to remixing (a Seven-Inch for Gossip and 'Tears Dry on Their Own' for Amy Winehouse, amongst others), N.Y.P.C.'s musical enthusiasm is limitless. When possible collaborations are mentioned, Andy gets incredibly excited- 'Well, obviously we'd love to do one with Bowie- though we might be doing a track with Paul Weller soon. There's a Best of British compilation coming out, and we've written a track that he's producing, but I don't want to give too much away just yet.' Despite being signed to the hip Modular label, N.Y.P.C. remain true to the minor venues where they honed their immaculate live set- 'Well, we've never played a stadium... I'd like to be given the chance, though not as a support act, that'd be too difficult. You can't beat a small, packed, sweaty club.' Amongst their various side-projects, the band is also in the midst of writing their second album, the follow-up to 'Fantastic Playroom'. Once more, when writing music is referenced, Andy's enthusiasm is tangible- 'with N.Y.P.C. there's more of an emphasis on having fun, doing what we want... really, we don't want to write for anyone else.'



# DISFUNKTIONAL



**Coolock hip-hop crew Disfunktional first popped up about three years ago, playing punk and diy gigs, and gaining a good reputation for their energetic and fun live shows. The outfit started out as three emcees and a mysterious figure known only as 'rap man', slaying audiences and smoking their way to oblivion.**

Things started to get a bit more serious and the addition of a dj came soon after. Playing everything from hardcore gigs, to oxygen, to hard working class heroes, to group member BDG's monthly night; 'oh snap', the group has maintained a great attitude and kept their sense of humor about the whole thing, according to them; "we basically never practice, get drunk and try to not mess up, sometimes it works out quite well, other times we fail miserably, the aim is good hip-hop that anyone could enjoy regardless of what their into, that and being payed with booze".

Regarding what types of gigs they play, their seems to be no criteria other than enjoying themselves; "it just seemed natural at the time to play with bands and play gigs put on by friends rather than hunting down big support slots or hip-hop nights we didn't think we'd

particularly fit in with, though that was along time ago at this stage I think its given us the view to accept most gigs regardless of the genre if we like the promoters or acts on the line-up, we feel lucky to have played a lot of great gigs".

Sounding a little like the Beastie Boys sitting at a Dublin bus shelter, smoking shitty soap bar and listening to a stoness throw comp, Disfunktional definitely have something to offer anyone remotely interested in hip hop, without reverting to the usual tough guy/bad background shtick, "were more influenced by the people and humour we grew up around rather than the how bad the place is, there's a lot of people making music about how rough their upbringing was, its not really the kind of thing we want to hear or the kind of songs we want to make".

The group is definitely one that's hard to place in the Irish hip hop scene, or any scene for that matter, "Don't get me wrong, there are a lot of acts out there that pride themselves on creating their own unique sound but then there are those who are content with making the same song over and over again. To really stand out I think you have to make your own sound that you want and not that you think people want to hear."

An album has been in the works for quite a while now, they maintain it should be out by 2008, however, there's nothing concrete yet, so just catch them play if you can.

[www.myspace.com/disfunk](http://www.myspace.com/disfunk)

[www.myspace.com/motunit](http://www.myspace.com/motunit)

**Words: Aonghus MacEvoy**

**Photo: Kate Southall**

# Star Little Thing

Words: Conor O'Neill



## Star Little Thing: It's all dinosaurs and dancing in the street for these guys.

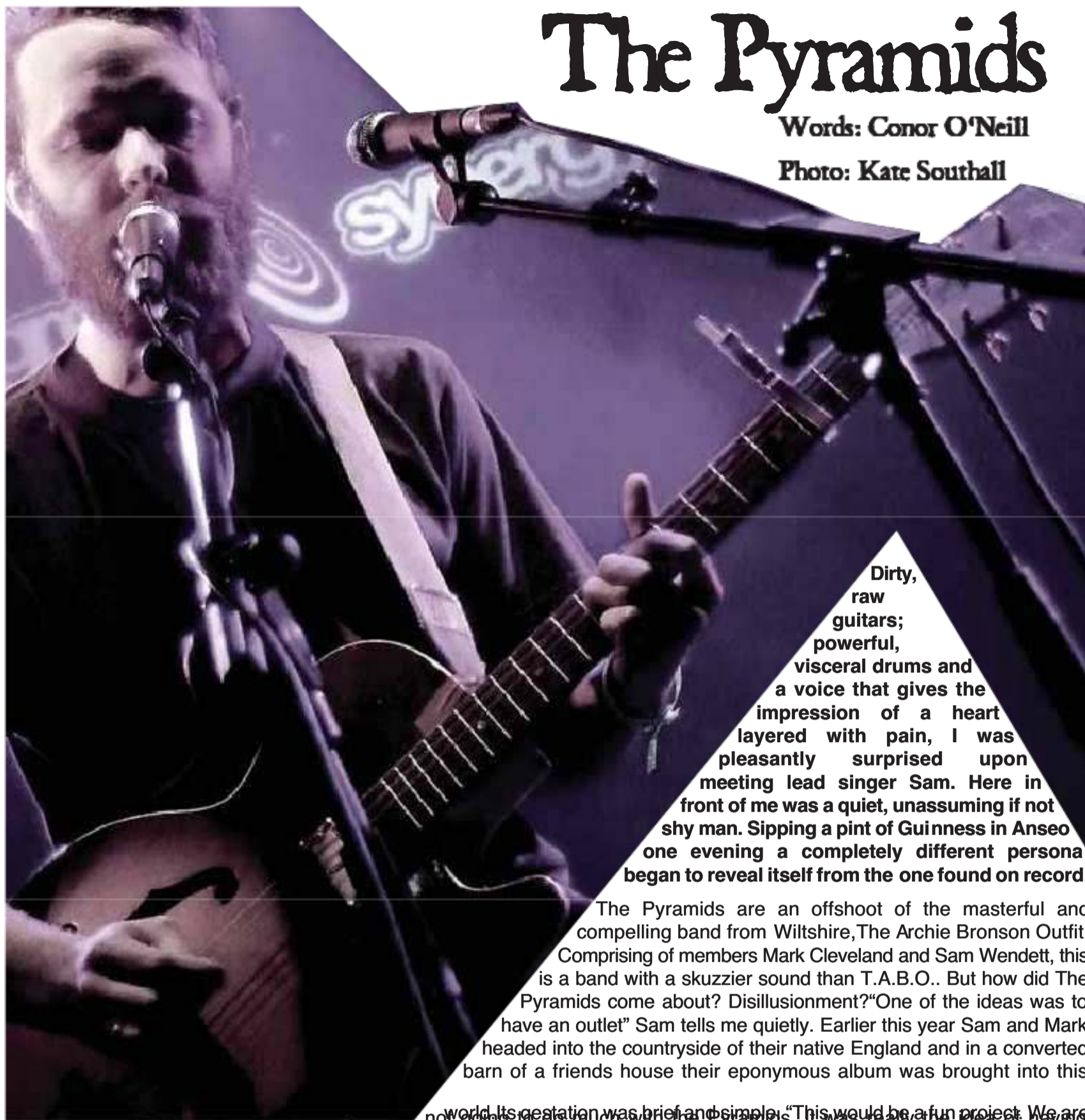
So here we are, in the back of a Ford talking about dinosaurs. This is not your average interview. Talking with Analogue just hours before their album launch in Crawdaddy band members Grattan, Arron and Crickey are debating the higher merits of the water born dinosaurs without a hint of worry or expectation of the night ahead. In less than a few hours they will launch their debut album, the oddly named *It's Easy To Be Alive You Just Are*, but it's dinosaurs that are nagging on their minds.

Star Little Thing are a strange mix. Lead singer Grattan is quiet and contemplative. Arron is an average, cool Dub. Then there's Crickey- sporting an odd mix of fashions (including a hat seemingly formed from the backs of a legion of sheep)-the enigma, carefully pondering our questions like a scientist working out an equation. Last year they released the explosive and incredibly danceable single 'Lovers of Life' that was a revelation in sound and style compared to what many of their Dublin peers were throwing out. It felt as if they had blown away the cobwebs residing on the morose shoulders of the singer-songwriters glutting Dublin and were heralding in a new exciting era in dance within our fair city.

Grattan and Arron had previously been in a rock band together, which over time dissipated. On the way they bumped into the wonderfully eccentric Crickey. A sculptor and a lover of jazz he is never without a bunch of slightly worn notebooks in his hand in which he jots down words, lines and lyrics about anything and everything. Though unorthodox, something special happened in the brew that has now become Star Little Thing. "When we meet up it's like a fusion of the three of us" Grattan explains from the driving seat. "I could be writing on anything. I could be somewhere completely different and the guys can be too and then we meet".

Hours were spent in Grattan's basement over the last year creating the album. Their first single 'Where Is The Child Gone' is a brooding stomper of a dance tune that simmers with ambition. Though it is the video that catches Analogue's eye. Part of the video involves Grattan dancing in the middle of a busy Dame Street in front of bemused onlookers. "We did it once with four or five cameras" Grattan tells us, trying to hide his grin. "This cop was literally on us so. If you look at the footage the cop is just looking at us for ages and he was just sitting there on a bike". "The cop literally said to him what was he doing wearing a top with a map of the world on it and yellow trousers" adds Crickey, "so he said it's a map of the world so he knew where he was going!" This wasn't the first foray into the strange on a video shoot for the band. "The one on Moore Street was weirder!" Grattan continues. The video for 'Lovers of Life' involved a trip to Moore Street with the three lads wearing an odd metallic chassis with seven cameras strapped onto it, made by Crickey himself. "It took twenty minutes. We ran down the road, than another street, which was a dead end and all there was was this Chinese guy just looking at us!"

The oddness continues into the live set. While the two giant hands which were a regular feature are gone, Crickey spices things up with glow sticks and flashlights. "The music's full on" Arron tells us. It is in their live show that one gets the full experience of Star Little Thing. They blast out a set which by the end of their crowning night in Crawdaddy has a bunch of Brazilians at the front almost fellating one of Crickey's glow sticks in a fit of music induced ecstasy. It is this combination of quirkiness, great music and blistering live sets that make Star Little Thing stand out from the crowd. "We want it to be about the music" Crickey tells me quietly and affirmatively, "that's what we want". And that's what we want. Star Little Thing is a band that is bursting with potential, all wrapped up in a cheeky and affectionate Dublin charm.



# The Pyramids

Words: Conor O'Neill

Photo: Kate Southall

Dirty, raw guitars; powerful, visceral drums and a voice that gives the impression of a heart layered with pain, I was pleasantly surprised upon meeting lead singer Sam. Here in front of me was a quiet, unassuming if not shy man. Sipping a pint of Guinness in Anseo one evening a completely different persona began to reveal itself from the one found on record.

The Pyramids are an offshoot of the masterful and compelling band from Wiltshire, The Archie Bronson Outfit. Comprising of members Mark Cleveland and Sam Wendett, this is a band with a skuzzier sound than T.A.B.O.. But how did The Pyramids come about? Disillusionment? "One of the ideas was to have an outlet" Sam tells me quietly. Earlier this year Sam and Mark headed into the countryside of their native England and in a converted barn of a friends house their eponymous album was brought into this

world. Its gestation was brief and simple. "This would be a fun project. We are not going to do much with the Pyramids. It was really the idea of having something quick and not fussy. We are not going to tour. It's more to make an album and that's it". Within two weeks the lads had created a batch of songs that have the heart of the Archie Bronson Outfit but with an edgier sound. "It was intentional to make it rougher and more garagey" explained Sam, wiping the froth from his beard slowly, "We had a more basic set up. It's a bit more exciting to work that way".

Basic is exactly what The Pyramids are. From their sound to their favoured themes of love and pain, they have sculpted a sound that harks back to the early days of vinyl. So are the band some form of musical luddites? "Not really" comes the reply. "It depends on what it is. I like some things like the Flaming Lips. That's really produced stuff in a really good way. I'm not a fan of really over produced stuff". So if the band were to put a bit of time into production, a twiddle here, more bass there, would that cause the songs to lose a bit of soul? "We thought that if we added some extra layers it would suck. I don't think our songs are intelligent enough to be dealt that way.". After another slow sip, savoring both the pint and question at large he continues. "Some of the soul gets sucked away if it's overworked. There is nothing to keep you coming back if it's overdone. It may sound impressive at first but there's nothing there to get you going again".

With a new Archie Bronson Outfit album eagerly awaited and the close relationship between the two bands I wonder if there will be some influence and experience from The Pyramids brought into their main band in the future. "I am sure some bits will make it into The Archie Bronson Outfit but hopefully the new Archie Bronson Outfit album will sound different from everything before but there's definitely crossovers".

Though they have a more cracked and jagged sound than one might expect, The Pyramids extol an organic rock n' roll experience, one which may at times intentionally put some people off. "I am not that worried about people hating it" Sam states with quiet resolution. "Just a small amount of music fans get it and that's good. I don't mind getting slagged off by the NME crowd. It's nice to have the hardcore people liking it". Here is a band guttural and abrasive yet refreshing at the same time. So get your bottle of whiskey and rock out in the old way to The Pyramids.



New York experimentalist four-piece Animal Collective recently released their eighth album “*Strawberry Jam*” on Domino to great critical reception. I caught up with member Geologist (Brian Weitz to his mum) to talk about the new album, the new label, the band’s unique sound, and a very strange experience in Punchestown.

**“Peacebone” and “Fireworks” seem a little bit more accessible to the general listening public than a lot of previous singles. Were you trying to make a sort of gateway to your music for people who had heard of Animal Collective, but never really gotten into you?**

No, we didn’t really think about it. If anything we were thinking more about people who’d been listening to us a long time. We thought they maybe wouldn’t like it as much since a lot of things that have been in our music, like a lot of guitars, or a lot of layers and vocal harmonies, weren’t really present in the songs anymore. I think we had that in our mind. Not that we were particularly trying for anything, those were just the songs we wrote.

**Many of the songs from “*Strawberry Jam*” were played in primitive forms on your 2005 and 2006 tours. When you play Dublin in November can we expect to hear songs that will make it on to a future record?**

Yeah, probably. We’ve already written a fair bit of our next record. We’ve about 10 or 11 new songs already so we’ve

been playing them a lot live. We play for quite a long time these days though, maybe 90 minutes or so, and obviously we don’t fill all that time up with new material, so there is going to be some old songs, and probably some songs from “*Strawberry Jam*” too.

I think it’s going to be our first time playing an Irish club. We’ve only played at festivals, I think.

**“*Strawberry Jam*” sees a shift in labels from FatCat Records to Domino. What were the motives in switching to a new label from a familiar one.**

Our contract with FatCat had expired, we’d only signed to do two records with them back in 2003. We ended up doing more than that, we reissued some old stuff, some EPs and whatnot, but it was over, and we thought we owed it to ourselves before re-signing to speak to all that labels that were interested in signing us. We’re interested in, not becoming pop stars as such, but getting our music out to the largest amount of people as possible. The point is for as many people as possible to hear it, and we thought that Domino had the resources and the know-how better than the other labels we talked to, or re-signing with FatCat. But it wasn’t like we jumped ship, we were without a record deal.

**Avey Tare designed the cover for the new album. Did the name come from the artwork of vice versa? It**



**seems more directly linked to the name than previous albums...**

The artwork came from the title. Maybe about six months before we went into the studio Noah (Lennox, Panda Bear) was looking at a packet of strawberry jam, and he really liked the way it looked, and said something about wanting to get the music to *sound* like that substance *looked*. So we went into the recording process with that in mind and Dave (Portner, Avey Tare) took the artwork from there.

**The several spin-off projects like Pullhair Rubeye and Panda Bear's solo work don't seem to have dampened the band's proficiency. Do the other projects help come up with ideas and directions you want to take Animal Collective?**

I'm sure they do. It's not like we talk about it a lot. But just staying creative and always working helps bring up new ideas...

**Are there anymore spin-offs in the pipeline?**

Well Josh (Dibb), who's Deakin in the band wants to take a break from touring for a while. He might be working on stuff at home. I'm not really sure what he's been doing, if that's going to turn into a release or what. But right now we've all been pretty busy, I think because once we finished Strawberry Jam immediately, within like a month, Dave, Noah and I basically wrote our new album, and that's the primary thing on our mind right now. It's the goggles we have on, we're looking at things that way.

**Before you lay albums down do you agree on lyrical themes or musical directions you want to take the band, or is it more organic than that?**

Not lyrical themes so much. Usually the songs start with a vocal melody and the lyrics come pretty quickly after that, or at least a general sense of that. Nobody tells anybody else what to sing about. In terms of sound we think about what we've done in the past, and especially on more recent records, and try to think about a way that we can move forward. Or not necessarily move forward, but move away from something we've already done. If we find ourselves repeating a certain style or a type of sound we tend to get bored with it pretty quickly, or we're not

very proud of ourselves. So that's usually the first thing we think about, and then over time, in the early stages of song-writing we think about what directions we are going in and narrow it down, and talk about that. So yeah sound-wise, there's a lot more thought put into it. But we let it happen naturally. It's not like even before we start playing we're going to make this kind of record. We see what we come up with, and then focus on something that makes it a more coherent set of songs.

**Yeah, the band's sound has developed so much since you started out. Are there any songs, or albums even, and wish you'd brought them in a different direction?**

To be honest I don't really listen to any of our old records. I always focus on the one we haven't finished yet. It's not really a worthwhile process for me to look back over stuff or rethink things. I'm a different person now, we're all different people now from the time we made those records. I have no regrets about who I was, or who we were back then. It's like looking at a photograph of yourself and saying "Oh I wish I had a different haircut four years ago". There's no point in think about it, that's

who you were back then. It's a document of what your life was like at the time. I don't believe there's any reason to ever question -yourself.

**It's hard to find an Animal Collective review where the word "influential" doesn't come up, but sometimes it's hard to discern your own influences musically. Are there any bands, or albums released recently that offered you new ideas, or made you think "I wish we thought of that"?**

I don't know about "I wish we'd thought of that", but that doesn't mean I think we're better than other bands or anything! Usually

the records we find inspiring are ones that don't sound like us anyway. We were all pretty into the "Donuts" record that came out from J Dilla a couple of years ago, and Madlib's hip-hop production, and that's definitely been an influence on how we look at using samples in our music. Sometimes I don't even have the time or money to keep up with new music. Obviously our friends in New York we've the most access to, like Black Dice and Gang Gang Dance, they're all very inspiring to us, and influence us, but not really in terms of sound. The thing about our group of friends isn't so much about us wanting to sound like each other; we want to sound like ourselves and sound original. When you see somebody else original, that's the most inspiring thing. And that happens a lot in New York. We'll see some of our friends play a show, and it'll inspire you to get up and do something, better, but not necessarily to move in a certain direction sound-wise.

**You seem to have some really die-hard fans, have you had any weird encounters with them?**

It gets a little weirder all the time. Naturally as we get a little bigger, interactions become a bit more sycophantic. Also as our audience gets younger, the maturity level gets a bit different, or the experience level? It's hard for someone who's 30, in normal life, to have a conversation with someone who's 14. Those two ages don't interact that often. There have been some weird things, nothing crazy. There's no groupies or anything like that! Even if I could think of any crazy stories I probably wouldn't talk about them. It'd be horrible if someone was reading this and embarrassed themselves!

**Do you think Animal Collective has an end? Do you have a list of aims or goals you'd like to achieve and then think "We don't need to go any further with this"?**

Not exactly. I think we're all aware there'll come a time that we don't want to go any further in terms of the life you have to lead. Like with touring and not seeing your family. A lot of us are married, or in serious relationships. One of us is a father. I think we all envision a day when the lifestyle... We won't want to go any further with that. Especially in this age, with downloading, you can't really make a living off record sales, you need to tour and whatnot. We see that as maybe a natural way it might end. But first and foremost we do this because we have fun playing music with each other. We don't have the ego to think that we're out to change music, we don't have a chance of changing popular music. We're not doing this to start a revolution. We're just having fun with each other, and I think that might last a long time. And even if we're not making a living anymore, if we had to get regular jobs or something, I could still see us playing when we get the chance.

**Words: Dan Gray**

**Illustration: Zoe Manville**



# ASOBI SEKSU

Words: Brendan McGuirk  
Illustration: Sarah Jane Comerford



The first time I heard Asobi Seksu was when my sister arrived back from New York. She had heard the album in some record store, immediately asked them what it was and bought it. It turned out to be Asobi Seksu's second album, *Citrus*. That was

about three months ago and I haven't stopped listening to it since. A more accessible blend of shoegaze and dream pop, *Citrus* is a collection of songs perfectly combining the beautiful ethereal vocals of Yuki Chikudate with the pedal-heavy crashing guitars of James Hanna which bend and weave up, down and beyond the octaves of the six string. The 2006 album was re-released by One Little Indian in Europe in August and now Asobi are on a massive European tour.

As Yuki sat in traffic in Manhattan, I rang her ahead of Asobi Seksu's first Irish show. Starting out in New York at the height of the Strokes popularity, Asobi Seksu are a band that have struggled to command attention. Even in their home town of New York, Yuki explains that when Asobi Seksu "first started out, people were not so open to what we were doing." Back then "it wasn't a very popular sound" but a few years on and things have changed "it's exciting for us now that people are actually paying attention." And with lyrics that hop, skip and jump between Japanese and English, AS make for interesting listening.

The Asobi Seksu sound, while it may be raw at times, is extremely honed and finely tuned, On *Citrus*, they had a

master plan to make sure everything came together in recording; "we had crazy charts and we arranged everything before we went into the studio, there was a lot of preproduction." Time well spent, as the songs possess certain

dynamics that go beyond the obvious. My Bloody Valentine comparisons. Although MBV are clearly a big influence, the comparisons do get a little taxing for the band at times "obviously it's a band we like a lot, you know and it doesn't bother us that people see the comparison that they reference that band but at a certain point it gets to be a little too much but it's just that one band, there were other bands around at the time who were experimenting with those textures and with that kind of guitar sound."

What makes Asobi Seksu so good is their ability to merge really upbeat pop vocals with psychedelic synths and layers of pitch bending tremolo laced guitars. They don't just emulate the sounds of those that have gone before but instead make the sound and textures their own. When I asked how it felt to continue touring with the same material for the past two years, Yuki simply replied "every song feels new because of the audience" and because of that it gives the songs "a whole new perspective, a fresh new take". So with that in mind, watch them live and see what your perspective is.

*Asobi Seksu play Crowdaddy, November 25<sup>th</sup>.*

# The National

The National popped up a few years ago, releasing a few EP's, including the excellent *Sad Songs for Dirty Lovers*, on their own label: Brasslands, the result of a few years of messing around.

Their success has been a slow burner - much like their music. It seems, initially, clichéd and heavily referential, but creeps up on you. Their last two albums (since they moved to Beggars Banquet) have been noticeably more successful. Unlike a lot of music which takes time to assert itself positively, it is not actually the music itself you have to re-evaluate, it's your own thoughts on the issue. You see, or hear, rather, the problem is The National have a singer with a deep voice, play guitars, have insistent, driving rhythms and slyly humorous poses, filled with broken relationships and obscure, nearly poetic references, within their lyrics. One almost cannot help but hear Joy Division, Interpol and mentally form a bracket. But it's us, not them. They actually bear mere resemblance, (see above list, if you've already forgotten), other than their general brilliance. Now, don't shout, they're nothing next to the seething dark brilliance of Joy Division, but they do stand up to Interpol. *Alligator* is quite the little gem and it's a little bad natured of me to suggest that its

just Beggars Banquet, PR dept, that made the difference. ~~Boxer~~, their second album on Beggars, is a further step up.

I find Aaron Dessner (multi-instrumentalist, brother of the rhythm guitarist) in a coffee shop, buying, well, coffee. The interview starts after a few minutes of me, panicked, talking down the line whilst he completes his purchase and ignores me.

The National have matured in public, taking a relatively unpromising start, almost feeling their way, from the generic to something with more than a passing resemblance of brilliance. "We all grew up in Cincinnati Ohio, in suburban quiet city, without much access to culture, and me and my brother started a band in our basement with our friends. It continued through high school. Eventually we all went to college in New York City, and years later, we were all living in Brooklyn, we had the idea, to get together. We'd play at the weekends and drink some beers..." They gradually found a voice, the lyrics of Matt Berninger progressing from nearly mindlessly repeated clichés, to minor poetry, full of small images and moments that mesh to create a picture of loneliness and break-ups far more effectively than his more literal first attempts. "It was a very gradual process..."

They formed Brasslands along with Alec Hanley Bemis, a writer friend, in 2001. Unlike, say, The Mystery Jets' decision to form a record label, it wasn't because they had been rejected by a label. "It was definitely our choice. When we first started making songs and getting together, we were just a bunch of friends, and it (the band) was never something we never intended to do professionally, we did it for fun. Eventually we made our first record, and really liked it, and a friend of ours said he used to have a label in school, so we re-started it and put out the record. Then there was another record by my brothers other band, but we never actually sent our music into any labels. Even then we were really into independent music and we never really thought about major labels or anything."

Following the reception of the *Sad Songs for Dirty Lovers* EP



they signed to Beggars Banquet, one of the larger "indie" labels knocking about encompassing Rough Trade records amongst others (Gary Numan!). "Well, yeah they're a bigger label, but still an indie label, so there's still the feeling like they're a family. And they've supported us really well, helped bring the National international..." It marked a jump in critical acclaim for The National's next album *Alligator*. Was it thanks to Beggars? "Well... I don't know if it was that. I think *Alligator* was definitely the first album that, kind of, became something more... well not mainstream but... it seemed very popular. I'm not sure if that was something to do with Beggars as much as where we were, in terms of our sound. It was a very good

time, a lot of blogs caught on to what we were doing. Obviously Beggars helped with what we were doing, making it available to everybody."

Live The National play their tracks expertly, filling the space between performer and audience with an aural presence so complete as to almost be physical. Their songs become big stomping beasts, saturating the gig almost as completely as the sweat-smell. After their recent Dublin gig a friend of mine was so hoarse from shouting, she could hardly speak the next day. An achievement. "We are intense, we try to bring the songs to life. We're a live band, first and foremost, although that was the last bit we did... Certainly Matt is a captivating front man, you never know what he'll do. We try to get a lot out of it."

So we chatted a wee bit on, talked politics ("we're left wing liberals") and the road noise became too loud to hear anything for a few minutes. He patiently waited it out, some firetrucks passing, and said goodbye.

**Words: Andrew Booth**

**Photo: Loreana Rushe**



Dan Snaith- formerly Manitoba-now Caribou- all-round one-man-band's ethos is simple: 'It's always very much music to me, the thing that excites me is sound and aesthetics and the way that music makes me feel.' His new album, *'Andorra'*, is a melodic funfair, encompassing dream pop, lush production and swirling hooks. As research for the record, Snaith fervently catalogued sounds and chord progressions, in order to find the ideal combination of melody, rhythm and timbre: 'There aren't that many chords or chord sequences in the world that humans like to listen to', he explains, 'I went through loads and loads of different songs, from any band from any time or whatever, not for the production really, but for how the songs were put together- the lyrics and the harmony and how all those things work together. I found there were so many common trends as I looked through these songs, a lot of songs would be just the same as another song from twenty years before.' Though Snaith has a Ph.D in Mathematics, he's reluctant to emphasise an analytical backdrop to this research. As with Caribou's music, he prefers to advocate an all-encompassing, all-embracing approach: 'It wasn't about being too analytic and sitting down and figuring out some chord sequence that I liked and then using it. It was just about figuring out what I find interesting about melodies and what I find interesting about how they can carry emotion and how they can make changes and harmony and stuff like that. Not about using other people's

ideas, but exploring what interested me about that melody or sound.' *'Andorra'* doesn't broach complex social issues, or allow for personal commentary- 'My music isn't about chronicling my life, or about social things going on, it's about the enjoyment of how much I love making music and listening to music. The album is composed of minute masterpieces, which, though they flow seamlessly into one another, also stand their ground alone. The latter was Snaith's main aim when writing the record- 'This time I wanted every song on the album to be like an actual song, an actual composition. I had all these ideas, like arrangement, melody and stuff. It wasn't like I was thinking 'what's this song going to go into next', I just put them in the order that made the most sense to me.'

Though the above principles translate well in the recording studio, they seldom come across as encouragingly whilst playing live. Though, in typical Caribou

fashion, Snaith is unfazed: 'It's not like it's ever been a problem, like 'how are we going to play this song live? There are some songs on the album that we can't play live, so we just don't play them, or if we have to change them a lot to play them live, we just change them.' While this attitude appears nonchalant, the reality encompasses late nights, rehearsals and a lot of hard

work- 'We play together for a month every day, for, like 8 hours. I'm lucky that the guys in the band are all amazing musicians, so we just took the songs and said 'let's try you playing this, and you playing that', then discussed whether we wanted to play them like they were on the album or differently to how they appear on the album. It's an enjoyable process, you know.' Given Snaith's overarching interest in aesthetics, it's not surprising that he plays a large role in the production of the visuals for his live show- 'In the past the videos we had were by Delicious 9 - a Dublin-based group of animators. We used them for the last two tours before this, but this time around, because I wanted more freedom to improvise as musicians on stage, it was important to me that the videos not be so narrative, because the narrative structure just ties us to playing the songs in the same way. This time it's more like patterns and geometric shapes than lighting effects or strobe-y effects. Myself and Ryan in the band have put them together actually.'

Yet, while Snaith cultivates the image of a laid-back musician (to the extent that he conducts this interview between trips to a hot spring spa in the Rocky Mountains'), very little in the realm of Caribou is left to chance. He orchestrated the seemingly chaotic soundings of *'Andorra'* according to his own directions- 'It was more of a conscious decision last time to have a variety of things going on. I like the fact that it starts with these kind of

euphoric, joyous pop songs or whatever, and ends more like everything has fallen apart a bit and all that enthusiasm's gone.

The end takes a weird kind of left turn, I guess'-and his previous incarnation's name was specifically chosen for its cultural signifiers- 'Manitoba is, like, a province in Canada, so I wanted the name to have the same remote Canadian connotations'. Snaith, while not self-absorbed, appears to often become lost inside his own head. On writing music, he states that 'I usually start writing with a bass-line, just a bass or a keyboard, and that would leave room for me to fill in all the harmonies in my head. I leave lots of space for the arrangement while I'm doing it'; While discussing the connection between music and mathematics, he is equally mentally absorbed: 'It's such an aesthetic thing for me. It's not about over-thinking things or being too conceptual. Or conceptual at all about anything. Both things are kind of creative, and things that I can get lost in my head with and kind of play around with ideas and

create something.' Indeed, he admits that it's kind of a relief to return home after touring, with an empty mind and a renewed vigour- 'It's kind of nice to have some space to sit down until something new begins. I kind of like the idea that when I get back it's a clean slate and I can start again.'

**Words: Ailbhe Malone**



Words: Darragh McCausland  
Photos: Loreana Rushe

Doodle

It's an hour before O'Death tear a blistering live set out of Whelan's impressive new soundsystem and three of the guys from the band are holding court on everything from murderous cats, beards, blogging, grunge and Yeats. It would seem banter comes as naturally to these lads as one of their dirty jugband banjo riffs. Guitarist and ukele

thumper Gabe is doing a comic piece of interpretive physical theatre that casts the influential music website pitchforkmedia as a giant robo-monster (replete with terrifying robotic voice) zapping bands with its judgemental death-rays. "BZZZZ BRRURRRR. You get an 8.2! You get a 6.5. RARRRRR, YOU GET ZERO. Pitchfork has spoken!" But first, the music.



O'Death are a New York based band that trade in a wild 'n' rootsy American style of music that sounds like Tom Waits and a bunch of pissed-up skeletons at an Appalachian barn dance. When asked to describe their music, fiddle player Bob tells me: "Dirt. Our common influence is dirty sounding music, we want to sound dirty. I think you can hear that we are influenced by that kind of stuff, punk rock whether it's the misfits or something, or old traditional American music, like old roots, gospel or the blues. Old dirty recordings, old dirty performances of that." Lead singer Greg agrees, "we like dirt." They also told me later that they like the Alice in Chains record *Dirt*. Thankfully, in spite of this dirt-talk they all looked rather clean (if bearded) and there was even a mild smell of deodorant in the room.

Greg tells me "Death is inevitable. Death is gonna happen. We've always sort of embraced death in our music. Y'know dark matter as it were." Gabe adds "right, like the New Orleans funeral march or the Irish wake. Its sort of like, yeah when granpa died we all partied down. That sort of thing." You can see what they are talking about in the barmy but brill video for their single 'down to rest' which is literally crawling with stop motion ghoulies and skeletons. According to Greg, "Oh Death is an old poem by Yeats I think. [Its] also an old folk song, something that's been around for a long time." Bob adds "its also a little Biblical, its in the Bible I think. Its everywhere"

Continuing to talk about their sound the guys tell me about how vital the live aspect of their art is to them. "It's the most raw and immediate thing" says Greg. Bob elaborates "when you record a group you tend to lose certain energy. Listening to the record, you can't pick up or see what people are doing. Its gets lost. You get so used to recording effects, thinking that stuff is overdubbed." Greg then explains the live feel of their records "We try to stay as close and true to our live performance on our records for the most part, and there might be just the odd bit, the odd few minutes where it just doesn't carry over or we want to add a little something else. This is important because our live show is just really where people are

affected by it, and we have the most fun there." Later on at the gig proper, this makes sense. At the end of the set, the band are giving it socks in the midst of the audience and everyone is swept right up in the experience. Greg's voice is a versatile thing, manufacturing guttural and raspy vocal lowdown tumbles

one minute, high and yelpy somersaults the next. It's a Tom Waits versus David Byrne vibe. Bob tells me about Greg's singing, "you'll hear a lot of traditional sort of vocal stylings in Greg's voice. And he uses his real voice, other than his vocal inflections there are no other effects."

In keeping with the zeitgeist, and considering that Analogue magazine has a large online component, I ask the band about blogs. "It gives a lot of exposure to new bands. It hypes up new bands". Gabe explains. Though, Greg sees a bit of a downside to this "they might not be ready for it. Bands get hyped now before they even bring out their first recording. With all that pressure, there is a danger it might not be good for them. They might just peter out under the pressure." He mentions fledgling US band Black Kids, who are swamped in hype despite having barely played a gig outside of Florida and only releasing a few demos. However, the guys generally agree that blogs have been good to O'Death. "I've read blogs where some dude has posted a much more accurate description of what we're about than one of these internet journalists." It was this comment that prompted Gabe's impromptu pitchfork spoof.

Before winding up I ask the band two last things. First off, with me being a proponent of the virtues of facial hair (on men) I couldn't help noticing that O'Death do a good line in beards. Do they have any beard care tips for Analogue readers with beards of their own? Greg (whose hardcore beard looks like impenetrable curls of black barbed wire) tells me he shampoos his. So does Gabe. I'm flabbergasted. I never thought of a beard as something that might need shampooing, and being told this by a band who are describing themselves as dirty? Yikes. But Greg has a good excuse, his wrought iron follicles need softening. "My beard shaves razors," he tells me. Finally, I ask what to expect from tonight's show. Gabe says "Its gonna be about ten minutes long. We're all gonna be naked and I'm gonna sing lying down." Greg chips in "Yeah and I bring face paint and paint everybody in the audience's faces." Well, there was no face-paint, but three of the band did take their tops off, and everyone who was there with me agreed that

it was a proper hoe-down. Just before I switch off the recorder and wish them luck, Greg sums the O'Death experience up nicely: "actually how about a bunch of hairy sweaty guys who really care about the music they play."



**Hello James!**  
Hello!

**First of all, I have to dispel a rumour that you are from Limerick-is it true?**

Well I am from New Jersey. I am three or four generations into the States and everybody is from Cork, I mean EVERYBODY. They all go back to the one place. My great grandparents are the most recent but that didn't stop my grandmother from having an Irish accent. It's true.

**So, you have just come back from a tour with Arcade Fire. How was that?**

It was great. It was really different. It was kind of nice to just not be in charge. It was like a festival. I kind of enjoyed it. I didn't think I would. I didn't think I would enjoy fitting into someone else's schedule but I really enjoyed it.

**You did a 7" single with the band. How did that come about? Did you all just sit down and decide to do a single together?**

Well I don't know. Things with us just happened pretty organically. Like we knew them and we met them a bunch of times and did a bunch of festivals and we got to know them more and more. I've known some of them for a few years now and just kind of enjoyed playing at festivals together and

hanging out. We could hang out with all the guys in the band and get along with them and it seemed like such an interesting thing to do. We thought it would be cool to do something with someone else. Like have a double bill more or less.

**So the tour was more or less a double bill?**

Yeah! It kind of lets off the pressure somewhat. It was not like some weird jerk headlining. It was like "Oh it's just like a festival". It worked out great.

**You were brought up in a small town in New Jersey and your only musical outlet was the Princeton Record Store. Can you describe it?**

It was a pretty incredible store. It still is. It's still worth driving down from New York to. Princeton is a big university town. I lived in the town next to Princeton, which was not a big university town. It was an old classical and jazz record store, which was famous around the world. It was old and tiny. Originally it was a storage room with a tiny front. What they originally did was make copies of what they had and send them to Germany and Japan and people would order it by mail-very rare jazz records and pristine classical records. Eventually one of the guys who worked there was a punk rock guy and it started carrying punk rock records. They would be beside the counter on some crates. There were no pop records in the store, you had either rare classical and jazz or weird punk



records. There were record stores in the mall that had like Billy Joel records. So that was it. You just go to get punk records, there was nothing else so it was kind of great.

### **So did the records there save your life?**

Oh sure. It just made it a little bit easier. Now, if you are growing up in a small town you have the Internet but you don't know, it is so, um, it is too free. I mean it's too unfettered. There's too much music and there are too many opinions.

### **It's like a haze of information now?**

Yeah. It's like the loudest opinion will win or the most clearly defined opinion. When you're a kid you're pretty immature about stuff like that so you end up listening to a lot of shit. I listened to a lot of shit when I was a kid and I still do. But having a really good store was nice as there was an opinion in that store that was something local. It was something you could argue with, you could embrace it or be against it. You were dealing with something localized that seemed more manageable and when you discovered something from outside it was kind of a revelation.

### **Like what?**

I remember the college radio station didn't like The Smiths when they first came out but WTR-a harder station to get- did. I heard the first Smiths record there and the Princeton record store didn't have it so I took a train to New York. I was like 12 or 13. I skipped school and went with a friend and found a record store with it. I was made fun of in the store cause I got the name wrong. I said "The Smiths Brothers" and I kept saying that and they were saying "I don't know what you're talking about". I said "Well this song- This Charming Man" and they were like "Oh! The Smiths! Duh!" and I was really embarrassed. But then about five years ago I told this story to a friend of mine and they were like "You were from a foreign town and you took a train to New York. You were like 12 or 13 and you found a record store and you got the Smiths first record on 12" import and the guy made fun of you because you didn't know what you were talking about?! Well that's pretty cool!" I was like "Yeah! Well fuck that guy!" Then I felt great, as I was the only guy with the song. But I feel now there is a difference. There is so much information and so many records coming out.

### **You have been in other bands before like Pony and Speedking and now you're in LCD Soundsystem. Is LCD Soundsystem just another stage or are you in this for the long haul?**

I don't know. The big difference to me is the bands that I was in before, I was a guitar player and singer and I was terrible. In Pony and Speedking I decided I was going to be a drummer. That seemed really dignifying. That was always going to be temporary as I could never deal with people super- well in bands. Like, I don't collaborate well. I get too frustrated and get panic attacks and have to leave. I used to lock myself in the bathroom during Pony and Speedking practices 'cause people don't listen to each other and there's no hierarchy. I just can't be around that. So LCD is easier, it suits my personality. I have been able to make dance records by myself and able to go on tour with the band. If I just

wanna be by myself working on stuff in my house, it's fine.

### **Thinking about that, you made a Fabriclive CD. What was that like?**

Well, I hate doing mix CD's for various different reasons. They are hard to do because eh, I used this analogy a few times before. It's like acting a movie on the phone. The thing for me about Djing is playing records to people. I am able to react to how people are responding and without that you're just, well, you could just go home and do what you want. But this was fun as Pat (the drummer) and I have been Djing on these tours regularly. We wrote them down and sent them in and got most of them approved.

### **Your new album Sound of Silver is a lot more seamless compared to the jagged sounds on the first album. Would that be true?**

Well I looked back at the first record and I was a little disappointed that the songs sounded a little too different from each other and not like there was too much variety. It sounded like, incongruous. I made this song and then I made this other song at a different time. I was just really obsessed about making this album more similar and more cohesive and more as a piece if that makes any sense.

### **One of the songs is called North American Scum. Were you afraid some people, especially North Americans may take the wrong impression when they heard it first and saw the title?**

I'm not really afraid. I am quite sure people do get it. It doesn't really bother me in theory. It's not something I get too worked up about. I get somebody who will say something and it's very presumptuous. It's funny because I thought my presumption was that people in the U.S would get it and people in the U.S would get mad and I was shocked to find that it was almost the complete opposite. Americans totally got it, people outside the States didn't get it at all. What I think is outside the U.S people think they have a good grip on American culture because it is such a diasporadic thrust. There's American TV and films everywhere. You think you have a really good grip on what American culture is like because I am inundated with it in a way Americans are not inundated by other places. But all that stuff is Hollywood and media, which is completely different to what actual people are like. It's the most unapologetic and simplistically overconfident part of the culture, an unreflective, overconfident part of the culture.

It's weird when you think of that cause you go "wait a minute!" In the seventies we had American film, pre-Star Wars which was incredibly thoughtful and incredibly introspective and filled with identity questions. All American punk rock is about identity questions and the same with American indie rock to a certain degree. So those people totally understood the feeling of growing up and wishing to be from somewhere else. Most of the Americans who were in the position of hearing the record were definitely the people who went through that phase. They understood the double meaning. I was surprised and kind of proud of my brethren not really needing to ask about it. They weren't like "So are you criticizing Bush?"





**That's what you must be getting over here (in Europe)?**

Yeah, like every French interview. I love France and I get on really well there. The people are very welcoming and accepting but that one song.... I was getting "You're not really American. You're from New York and I would just say "What the fuck are you people saying?!" That's a European classic. I go "have you *been* to New York?!" It's not a European city. It's a very specific American city. That's a really common perception that New York is not American.

I am always stunned when people say that to me and think it's a compliment. It's like "Wow!" It usually comes in the same breath that Americans don't usually know other places other than America and think they know everything. What they are basically telling me is that they think they know all about my country but they don't.

**And you're not really from New York anyway!**

Yeah. I grew up in a small town that changed a lot. When I was born it was a farm town with a couple of suburban houses. There were no trees and it was built around very tiny towns from the 1600's. My town became bigger and overtook those. So growing up it was half of these low-rent suburban kids and farm kids. My neighbourhood also was forty percent Taiwanese, which was really strange. It was just a weird little place. There were a lot of drawbacks for a lot of the kids like the small mindedness but on the plus side people just didn't mouth people off. People didn't get away with this kind of psychological cruelty without getting a punch in the face.

**What do you mean by psychological cruelty?**

Like these kids and friends I know who went to fancier prep schools. The viciousness of kids always trying to outdo one another, always saying the smart ass things, always trying to make you look stupid, always trying to humiliate you. That sort of thing was very alien to me. Where I was brought up if someone tried to humiliate you, you punched them in the face.

But these kids would go "Oh you got to resort to violence?" and I am like "Yeah! You're being an asshole! You are going to continue being an asshole so I am gonna punch you in the face so maybe next time you're not going to be an asshole to someone bigger than you". That was sort of my childhood.

**I suppose you still get that now.**

Yeah. Like, I was in London and was Djing and this guy goes like "I like some of your records but I think your set is shit". I just grabbed him by the collar and said:

"This is what it is going to be like. I am going to come over the fucking barrier and I am going to kill you. I am going to beat the shit out of you". First of all I thought to myself "You think you are being clever. You think you have a deep sense of irony. You think you've got me. That's what you think but you are wrong". This had already happened to me there like thirty times so he was at least thirty deep in the same fucking hole.

I was going "You have never met me before and you come and talk shit to me like that, thinking it's ok cause I'm famous?! You presumptuous ignorant fuck!" He was shitting in his pants and saying I should be able to take criticism. I said I could take criticism from people I know and my friends and are you really telling me that you would walk up to someone in the street and say "You look like a fucking idiot" and not expect to get punched?

This guy obviously grew up in a cruel environment where you got respect from humiliating somebody and showing others that you were just not a simple person. Everyone else was enjoying themselves there and if he didn't like it he could just go.

**So what did you do?**

I told him "You are going to look at the floor and walk out. If you so much as make eye contact with me or say a fucking word I am going to come up and beat the shit out of you in front of everybody". So he left. It was a very satisfying moment!

**So you lost your temper. On that note, thinking stupidly, are you afraid of losing your own edge?**

Not really. I think it's a natural curve to things I am comfortable with.

**Are you going to age gracefully?**

Nah! I am 37 and I am still doing this. I think I missed that opportunity! Now I actually wanna do even more embarrassing things that I am too old to do. I am training to fight. I am doing Brazilian ju-jitsu!

**Words: Conor O' Neill**

**Photos: Loreana Rushe**

# King Tut

The sign on their Myspace says Asheville, North Carolina, but King Tut's pyrotechnic psychedelia might be more at home in Scandinavia. An understated yet frenetic fusion of acoustic instrumentation and electro beats, Tut are perhaps closer to Sigur Ros or even Aussie improvisationalists Architecture in Helsinki, than American contemporaries 'Explosions in the Sky'. From Appalachian guitars plucked over heavily sampled vocals on 'Alone Together', to cathedral electronica on 'Luke's Hymn' - a slow-burning forest fire of a track, reminiscent of Agætis Byrjun's 'Staralfur', to the shoegaze theatre of 'Somehow I Found You', and the 8bit electroclash of 'The Ocean of Motion', Tut's debut album 'Chopping Wood and Carrying Water' is an acid mouthful of fruity originality.

King Tut are Mark Boyd and Drew Veres, school friends out of Bay Village, Cleveland, who've taken time off from college to live and play music together. Tut are currently signed to Amaro Dolce, a tiny Boston indie label. Their upcoming album will be the label's debut release. In July 2006 the boys struck out for Asheville, NC; a manicured Tuscany of the Mid-East, drawn by the area's artistic community and outstanding natural beauty. The 'self-consciously amateur' music that's emerged since, and from months before spent trading loops in isolation, is a complex fusion of folksy improv and electronic experimentalism. 'Chopping Wood and

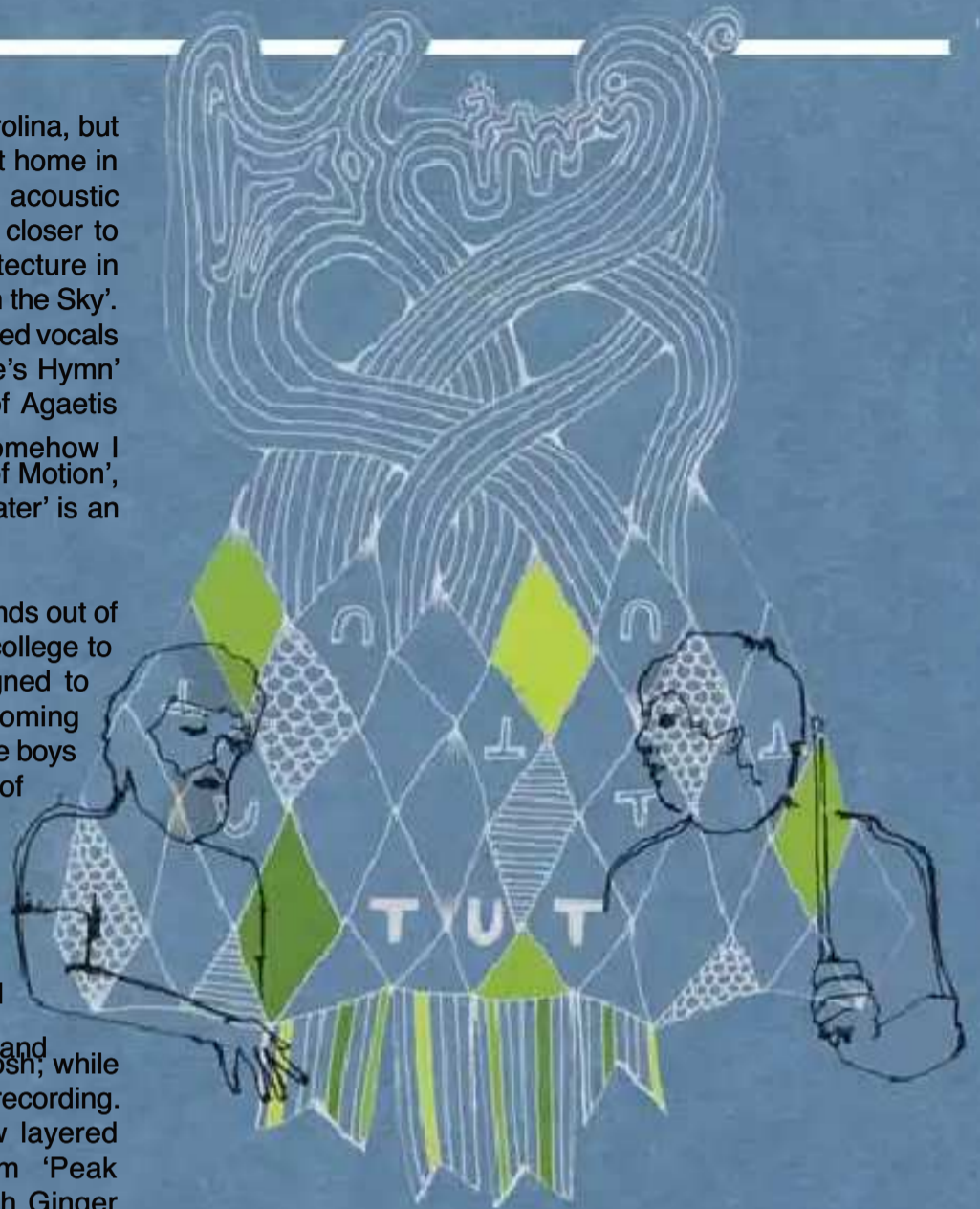
'Carrying Water' was laid down in bedrooms, dorms and college studios, in Garageband on an aging Macintosh, while Mark and Drew worked minimum-wage jobs to fund recording. The album's rustic origins, its stylistic variety, raw layered harmonies, and epic refrains (Mark calls them 'Peak Moments'), bring to mind Mirah's collaboration with Ginger Brooks Takahashi, 2003's 'Songs from the black Mountain Music Project'; and indeed Carrying Water shares the sizzling fury of Phil Elverum's discordantly thrilling Microphones productions. Says Mark of such moments - "When it's done right it's a kind of holy thing to me, it really reaches out to you and into you and surrounds you and you just understand. There is a clear open channel of communication between you and the musician and it's beautiful."

There's so much variety here that it's hard to draw general comparisons, but fans of Mogwai, Broken Social Scene and

even Grandaddy should all find something to enjoy. Likely to draw attention are the album's spare but intricate drum loops.

Drew cites the influence of everyone from John Stanier, to JoJo Mayer and Thelonius Monk. "A good drummer is able to sing through his instrument and compliment the parts of his fellow musicians. John Coltrane is a personal favorite. He literally sings through the tenor saxophone. His playing has influenced me to really hear the tonal qualities of the drum set and fit them with the guitar lines to create a fuller more distinct sound for a song."

Tut have arrived at an understanding of the contemporary music market that often eludes more established acts. Aware that obscurity is a far greater threat to young artists than piracy, the band have gone beyond using MySpace (where Analogue heard first heard them), and set about directly emailing songs to a growing list of fans. Mark is particularly positive about P2P, "I love peer to peer sharing. I think it's got corporate big guys in a bundle and that's great. At least some of the reason people don't buy records any more is that they know it's not going to the band. Why should we require people to toss some paper with imaginary value into our hat? Music has real value. Emotions have real value. That's what matters."



I ask him to explain how the birth of the net and the drawn out passage of the 'industry' proper have affected the bands promotional decisions.

"Being able to spread music so easily and to such a large audience is a beautiful thing. We have the ability to play our music for someone on the other side of the world, by just clicking away from the comfort of our own home. As for the death of the major labels? Well it's about fucking time... It's so easy for people to overlook one of the true meanings of making music, self expression. The idea that there are corporate know-it-alls deciding what the general public should be listening to is a joke. Now there's finally a way for damn good musicians to get their music out, and it has these big types on edge."

Mark is similarly dismissive of Radiohead's latest foray into digital marketing, 'In Rainbows'.

"I think what Radiohead did was great, but it's by no means revolutionary. Big bands in Japan and other countries had done this years before, figuring that if people like them enough, they'll buy the CD, but they'll definitely go to see them in concert."

King Tut are the kind of band we're seeing more and more right now; a potpourri of influences, keener on developing as musicians than aspiring to a traditional major label recording career. With independent releases this year from everyone from M.I.A to Prince and indeed Radiohead; the group's independence shouldn't prevent them from making a splash deserved by this fiery, original and charming release.

*It might be a while before they tour, but King Tut release their album 'Chopping Wood and Carrying Water' (title taken from 'Be Here Now') soon. If you're in the neighbourhood of Asheville, you would do well to catch them. Otherwise, hit the band up for demos at [keepyourkingsinthebackrow@gmail.com](mailto:keepyourkingsinthebackrow@gmail.com) or check out their new material on MySpace (hint, Google 'king tut asheville').*

Words: Gareth Stack

Illustration: Zoe Manville



# Bonde Do Rolê

Brazilian

trio Bonde do Rolê have come a long way since their first Irish show last October. They've gone from playing a half-empty Crowdaddy to filling up the Bodytonic Arena

at this year's Electric Picnic, as well as countless other festival performances across the Globe this summer. I spoke to DJ Gorky ahead of their November performance in The Button Factory. Of course, this being my first interview, the recorder stopped working and I lost the first five minutes of the conversation. I can tell you however, that they will be performing *Gasolina* for the first time on this tour, as Marina has finally learned her cue points. As well as that, the next album will (hopefully) feature a full brass section, provided by none other than the Brazilian Military Brass Band. The rest of the conversation went something like this.

**You play a lot of Brazilian music [in your DJ sets], but you're kind of like Erol Alkan and 2manydjs, that kind of style? But then the Bonde do Rolê sound is much more inspired by 80s rock. Do you ever have a difficulty keeping the two of them separate?**

No, not really. The whole influence for Bonde do Rolê was 2manydjs as well, blending stuff, but the difference between us and 2manydjs is that we blend with Brazilian influence. If we were doing with anything else it would sound just like 2manydjs trying to be a bootleg band. Not Soulwax though, they're completely different.

**You know the first *Solta o Frango* single? The track *Bondallica* that's on that CD is different to the one on the album [the original version features the voice of a heavy metal fan shouting "Heavy Metal rules" etc].**

Because we couldn't clear the Heavy Metal Parking Lot sample. That's from a documentary from the 80s called Heavy Metal Parking Lot, and we couldn't clear the sample. That release that was out on CD in Brazil only, had the sample. We put all those tracks there, because we didn't have any other songs to put on, and then it ended up on the album as well.

**I got that at the show in Dublin last year.**

I remember that show, we were so happy, we sold so many t-shirts and CDs, we were running back to the hotel, it was fun.

**Brazilian 80's rock?**

**A Full Brass Section?**

**Embarrassed Grandfathers?**

**Analogue investigates.**

[Gorky had earlier mentioned that it

was after this particular show that Bonde do Rolê were signed to Domino.]

to Domino.]

**Do you ever find that you have a crowd that doesn't really want to party the way that sort of crowd did, have you ever had any bad reactions?**

Yeah, we played this show in New York, but New York's like that, especially Manhattan, they're over there just to be at the place, and talk about it afterwards. We played at the Natural History Museum, that couldn't be a worse place for us to play. There was like ten, fifteen, of our friends having fun with us, and then I could see fifty-year old couples, drinking wine and not paying attention at all. But we managed to have fun by ourselves. It's funny because in Manhattan it's always like that, but if you go to Brooklyn it's completely different, and it's the same city.

**Crazy. I was going to ask about DJ Chernobyl [aka Freddie Van Halen], he's a big legend in Brazil, right?**

Indie-wise yeah, not like mainstream wise, he was one of the first people who mixed baile funk with rock and stuff like that, like ten years ago. It was really fun working with him, and he's our friend.

**He worked with you guys on the album?**

He recorded the album with us, cause he was the one with the good microphones, we only had the cheap ones. We recorded the whole album back in our place with him, it was fun.

**Who's been your favourite person to work with so far?**

Freddie is really good to work with. Yeah, probably Freddie, because if we go on to him at 4am in the morning "So he's like "yeah yeah, sure, just gimme a beer and we'll do it." Diplo is like, [makes explosion sound] we have to be babysitters, "Let's work right now" and we have to sit him down and put his computer [away], and not let him check his emails, and put away his cell phone, and his sidekick. We have to put all that away, "No, let's work." But he's fun.

**And what about Radioclit?**

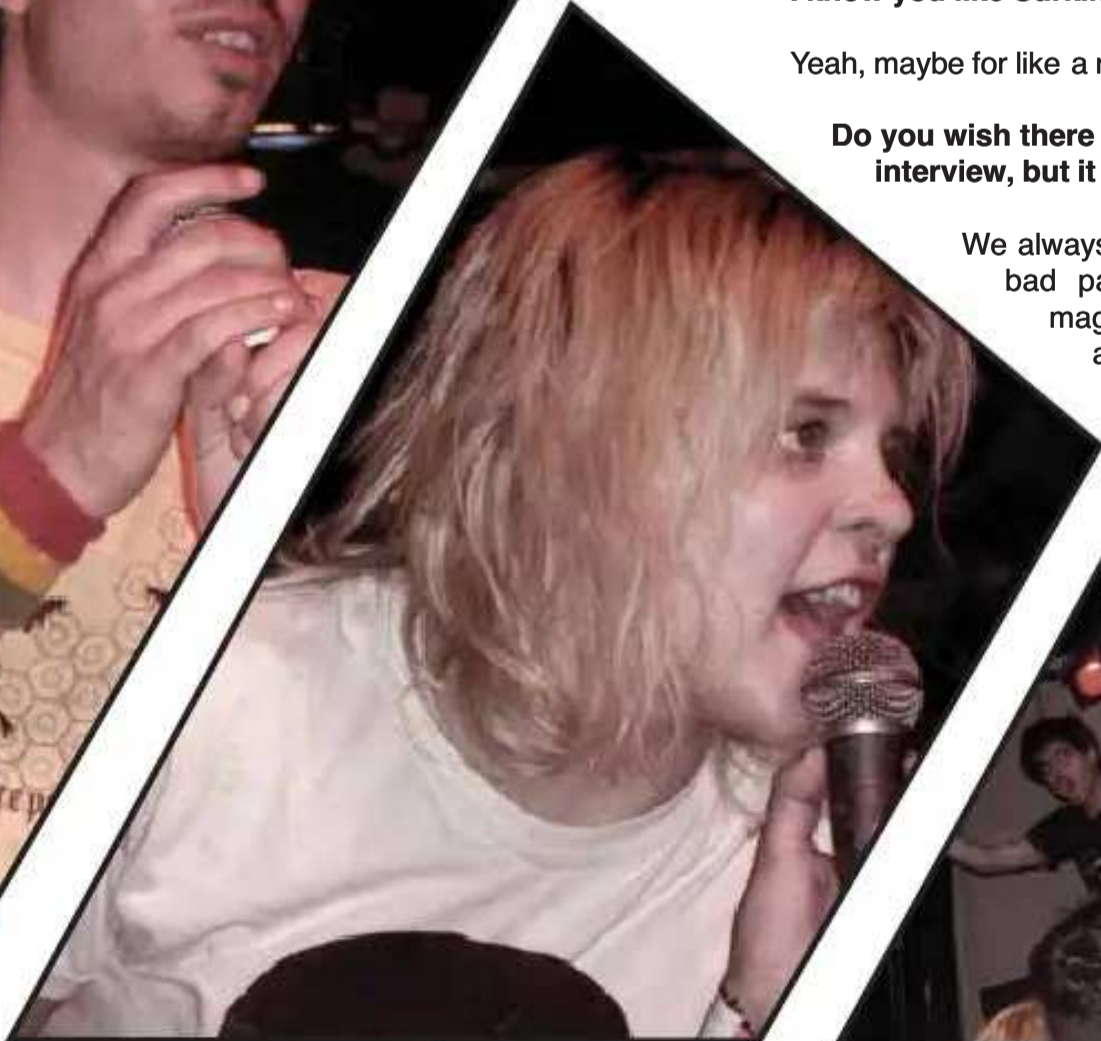
The only track we did with them on the album was something we recorded in five minutes, and we kept doing re-edits between us, using the internet, one sending each other the stuff. They're really professional as well. I lived the whole summer with Johann, one of the guys from Radioclit, and I know he's really committed, he's down for you. We needed some help with some stuff and he was the first one to help.

**Oh, cool. The artwork on the singles is pretty crazy.**

Thank you. It was done by this friend of ours from Curitiba. For the first Domino release, the *Solta o Frango* one, we were like "oh, we want a girl in a bikini doing barbecue, and you have to put a weird setting." For the second single [*Office Boy*], I was like, "I want a naked guy". But then we couldn't do the whole naked guy, so we had to cut him in

half. For the *Gasolina* one, we actually didn't say anything to him, he used the lyrics. It's a gorilla smoking a pipe. It's fun. It's my favourite one so far.

**And then the second *Solta o Frango* one has some chickens coming out of a barn [*Solta o Frango*]**



**translates roughly as release the chickens, or to go crazy].**

The second *Solta o Frango* one had a better version, but Pedro and Marina didn't like it. I kind of liked the old version, but we're never going to use it. Maybe on a box set in like 20 years, "Oh this is the cover we never used." There's like tons of different versions of the tracks on the album, but I don't have half of them. I'm asking all my friends that I sent the tracks at the time, "Do you have this version of blah blah blah?" For instance, *Office Boy* had a different chorus, it was something in Portuguese, but I don't have that one anymore, and everyone keeps asking me about it. The new version's better.

**What do you think of the remixes that people have done for you?**

Usually I get to choose them, since I'm the DJ. I'm really happy about them. My favourite batch is going to be the *Gasolina* single. The Buraka [Som Sistema] remix was already out, but we're re-releasing it because it was really good, there's also going to be the Crookers, and Fake Blood, Peaches as well. That's my favourite pack. And the Brodinski remix and Shir Khan ones [of *Office Boy*] as well. I tried to call people that we liked but they're not really big. For instance, we would love Soulwax remixing us, but they're too big for us. I tried to call people who I admired but it could be easier to work with, like Brodinski and Shir Khan. I hope they get big, so I can go like "Oh, we had one of their first remixes".

**Is there anyone else you want to work with? I know Marina worked with The Go! Team.**

Oh, yeah, and she's working with TTC right now. I really want to work with a lot of people, on the second album, like Switch, and the Crookers, and Simian Mobile Disco. We want to finally ask Spank Rock and Amanda Blank to be on the album, they're always at our gigs, and we sing together on some songs as well. It would be nice to actually have them on the record. Who else. I would love to work with Soulwax, but that's impossible.

**I know you like Surkin, have you tried talking to him?**

Yeah, maybe for like a remix, for the second album.

**Do you wish there was something you could say in an interview, but it never comes up?**

We always say everything we want to, even the bad parts. Even when my mom gets a magazine, especially the Brazilian ones, and we say a lot of crap on them. She's like, "Why did you say this Rodrigo? Your grandpa could read this!" I'm like, oh whatever.

**Words & Photos: Aidan Hanratty**



**NEIL YOUNG // MICHAEL FAKESCH // 4TRECK // GRIZZLY BEAR // JACKNIIFE  
LEE // PET SHOP BOYS // ROBERT WYATT // DAVID GERAGHTY // THE  
CLIENTELE // NANCY ELIZABETH // PRAM//EETERKLANG // GEORGIE JAMES  
// PSAPP // ROISIN MURPHY // THE PYRAMIDS // TWO GALLANTS // STAR  
LITTLE THING //**

**Chrome Dreams II**  
**Neil Young**  
**Reprise**



What comes to mind think of when you think of Neil Young? A pacifist folkie strumming away with Dylan and Mitchell, a hard rocking guitar hero, the Godfather of Grunge? Maybe you remember him for *Trans...* Whichever it is, you wouldn't think of Young as a lecherous old geezer; a hard drinking, womanising, troublemaker. Nonetheless this is the persona which Young assumes for his best song in years: *Dirty Old Man*, a pure slab of Crazy Horse wonder which out-shines all the other tracks on his latest album *Chrome Dreams II*.

Young's been very prolific in recent years, especially considering his close brush with death due to a brain aneurysm in 2005. However all his recent albums have had a very conceptual basis. This began with *Greendale* back in 2003, his astonishingly good melodramatic hillbilly opera. Since then they all seem to have been experimental exercises in theme or genre. *Prairie Wind* was a hark back to Harvest era folkiness, *Living with War* was his attempt to reinstate the power of the protest song. *Chrome Dreams II* however is an entirely different kettle of ferrets. It's a sequel to the unreleased original *Chrome Dreams*, which was planned but unfortunately shelved in 1977 in favour of *American Stars and Bars*. The original included *Like a Hurricane*, an acoustic version of *Powderfinger*, *Welfare Mothers* and *Pocahontas* to name just the very best. As a result, the title of this release is striking statement of Young's belief in these songs.

It starts with a harmonica, some lilting guitar and suddenly we're wondering whether *Beautiful Bluebird* is a cutting floor victim from *Harvest*. Is this 1972? The second track *Boxcar* gets things moving a bit, it's got an *Ohio* vibe to it and ghostly backing vocals, nonetheless it still feels dated. This is because the first three tracks of *Chrome Dreams II* are all relics of the eighties from the *This Note's for You* era. *Ordinary People* is the third of these, an eighteen minute long dirge of traditional Young verse/solo composition. Bombastic horn arrangements smother all the instrumental passages and even when we do get to hear a bit of Young's guitar licks they seem tired and worn, with none of the fieriness of *Cowgirl in the Sand* or *Cinnamon Girl*. Although these have been live standards for years, they've never been recorded before, and in truth there's no real need to air them now. Despite this *Ordinary People* has been a firm favourite in Young's live repertoire for years. We were bound to see it released at some stage, though in this current form it's only a chore to listen to.

The rest of the album is melange of new songs in different styles, but two themes thread all the tracks together: old-age and, Neil's old favourite, the open road. *Shining Light*, *The Way* and *The Believer* all tie in the old-age theme in a slightly corny but soul-infused way. This is a style that Young has flirted with before but never fully embraced. *The Way* especially encapsulates this, with its very lo-fi Beatles-esque sound. It's a wonder to hear Young trying something that for him sounds fresh. It's a sweet sixties-pop gem. Whereas *Spirit Road* and *No Hidden Path* run the same gauntlet of hippie-rock nostalgia that he's tread countless times before. *Dirty Old Man* is without a doubt the highlight of *Chrome Dreams II*. It rocks. Really hard.

In the way you want Neil to rock; completely fuzzed out with lashings of blasted solos and that Crazy Horse pounding that sounds like the hooves of the great Lakota's mount thundering across the plains. It's also comic, try imagining Neil as filthy old man; drunk, sneering at women and starting fights he's bound

to lose. To top it off it has the haunting sense of melancholy that all his best songs contain, a sense that this may be a tragedy, but the feeling is too ambiguous for us to pin down.

*Chrome Dreams II* has been released at a time when many were expecting the release of the *Archives* box set they have been anticipating for years. An eight disc box set of live recordings, b-sides and rough cuts from Young's long and meandering career seems like the perfect way to cap off the work one of popular music's rock legends. This probably isn't going to appear any time soon though. Young is like Madonna, constantly shifting, changing and looking for new creative outlets. Unlike the Harlot-Queen of Pop though, these aren't motivated by any desire to conform to marketing department demands; he follows his own muse. Although in recent years she has led him astray, to create some boring and sometimes puzzling work; with *Chrome Dreams II*, Neil Young is back on track to creating not essential, and maybe not great, but certainly good and solid eclectic albums in the style of *After the Goldrush*. If he continues at this rate, don't expect *Archives* anytime time soon. Mr. Young just remember; rust never sleeps.  
**Paul Bond**

**Dos**  
**Michael Fakesch**  
**K7**



With Prince's crowning residence at the O2 Arena ended and musicians like Justin Timberlake unfortunately moving towards a more hip hop sound, I ask you this question. Who's gonna funk us up now? A good healthy dose of funk is good for the hips and as a means to get close to that hot guy or girl on the dance floor. Germany's Michael Fakesch is a man who with his debut album *Dos* has combined the classic funk sound of Prince and to a lesser extent Michael Jackson with a good old dose of electro.

*Dos* is an album that is unquestionably funktastic and as Michael says on the first song 'Escalate', "I'm everything you need". Michael Fakesch has cultivated a sound, which, with its electronic beats and twiddles, is unquestionably modern. At first listen one may think that Har Mar Superstar has returned minus the joking lyrics. Michael has a voice quite similar to the pervy Har Mar but the beats are more professional, more confident and more astute. It laces its sexuality in the squeaks of the turntable and beat box.

So what about the songs? 'I Want It' is pulsating, slinky and undeniably sexual with a throbbing electronic beat and suggestive lyrics. 'On The Floor' is a nasty, filthy song sung by a voice that sounds like a banshee having sex. That may sound weird but it is incredibly affective. It's filthy, there's no denying it, as Michael screams "Lets get on the floor!" to a throbbing beat that is achingly good. However it is in songs like 'Escalate' where you see the comparisons to that artist formally known by an odd little symbol. It positively pulsates and is littered with provocative lyrics.

*Dos* is an album to test many fans of old funk. It sounds like the next technological level of the genre, while also appealing to fans of electronic music too. Michael has delivered an album that drowns in electronic break beats. It is this mix that elevates this album above the other graduates from the School of Prince. Here is 21<sup>st</sup> century funk fused successfully with modern electro and break beat. It may be a bit too dependent on technology and the computer. The more natural sound of a guitar would add a more basic feel to accentuate the sexuality. Near the end

the quality also dips but there is enough here to get anyone frisky.

Michael Fakesch has created a slinky and very funky album. It is a musical black dress that will at times appeal to many people and many styles- So let's all get sexed up to *Dos!*

**Conor O'Neill**



**(almost) complete ReCordings from 1995-2007**  
**4Treck**  
**Self Published**

*(almost) Co(mplete ReCordings)* is the product of over a decade of toiling for London based multi-instrumentalist Sam Callow AKA 4Treck. Recorded using a basic 4Track recorder (no prizes for guessing the origins of his name so) Callow uses piano, guitar, violin, voice, accordion and percussion samples amongst others to produce sweet, melodic music that is difficult to define. Drifting between experimentalism and acoustica, folk and blues, 4Treck's albums are quirky, eccentric, witty and original if chaotic in parts. The sheer volume of material in this collection is daunting at first however, a trawl through the workings of Callow's mind (and humble recording studio) proves rewarding for those with enough patience to see it through.

Citing influences as diverse as "Appalachian banjo music", The Jesus Lizard and Serge Gainsbourg to name but a few, it comes as no surprise that 4Treck's music is off the wall. The collection offers us insight into the mind of a man who in his own words "makes music based around approaches, such as spontaneous improvisation, chance". The first of the five albums is folky and sweet, opening with an aptly titled *Bouncy Country*, a track that plods along pleasantly enough with a cheerful melody and upbeat feel but which, at 6 minutes 24 seconds, is perhaps a bit long. Unrestricted by record labels and producers, Callow is free to do whatever the hell he wants creatively speaking. Good, no doubt, for artistic expression but you cannot help but feel that some of his songs are a tad self-indulgent. There is very little to keep 4Treck in check and at times his songs seem to lose the run of themselves, drifting off into a quiet chaos. Despite this, however, Callow's talent is self-evident, especially on tracks such as *French Song*, a tasty number sampling French vocals and jazzy drumming. Also worth a listen on this one is the final track, *RobSam Medley*, in which Ruins' *Stone-Eater* and (rather unexpectedly) T.L.C.s *No Scrubs* get the 4Treck treatment. The result is a gritty and entertaining track which nicely wraps up album number 1.

Album number 2 offers us an altogether more random selection. A so-called "compilation of very old recordings", it features tracks ravaged by erratic samples and unstructured melodies. Listening to it is like walking in on a jamming session unexpectedly. Unpredictable and frenzied and comprising 32 tracks, it's not for the faint of heart. Inspired in places it houses several gems (*Frank's in art (the) R.A.* and *Rawhide Ending* for instance) but it is not an easy listen and at almost 70 minutes, shows once more the self-indulgence of an experimental artist keen on show off his talent. Callow's experimentation here is not particularly successful and will leave listeners baffled if experimentalism is not their thing. Track 12 for instance, *What the...* is a bizarre amalgamation of blips and synths. A 'weird for

the sake of weird' production devoid of any broad appeal.

Album number 3 moves more towards electronica with spacey samples featuring heavily. The effect is a more ambient album, easier to listen to and easier to enjoy. It is still branded with 4Treck's trademark eclecticism but is better structured and the overall effect is dreamier. This is laid-back, atmospheric music more likely to appeal to a wider audience than the rest of 4Treck's experiments. Although still zany in places, this CD is the pick of the bunch.

Album 4 is equally mellow to begin with, opening with acoustic tracks and demonstrating once again 4Treck's love of the unconventional, especially on tracks such as *Imp-Heavy* and his short cover of Survivor's *Eye of the Tiger* on the final track. As we've come to expect at this stage, 4Treck defies convention here, blatantly sticking two fingers up at commercialism with this witty track.

Returning to a folkier sound on album number 5, 4Treck once more delivers a dreamy acoustic mix of pretty little songs. This album is a lo-fi treasure trove and will not disappoint those in want of a something with more direction than his other offerings. It ends wonderfully with an accordion heavy, Gallic influenced *Je Me Promenade*.

The collection is available for purchase only through the artist himself. At €30 a pop, it's not exactly cheap for a bunch of home recorded CDRs. However, 4Treck's talent as a musician is undeniable, as those who are patient enough to sit through the *Recordings* will learn. Gifted and original, 4Treck's quirky music is a bit frenzied at times but definitely worth a listen if you're looking for a break from the norm.

**Olwyn Fagin**



**Friend and Foe**  
**Menomena**  
**City Slang**

*Friend and Foe* is somewhat of a marathon for the listener- It's easy to pelt through the first few tracks, *Muscle N' Flo*, *The Pelican*, and *Wet And Rusting*, and think that "this is all a bit easier than I thought". However, with a little pacing, the album's subtleties begin to reveal themselves.

The sinister saxophone and strange mewling in the background (I'm pretty sure they're using kittens instead of plectrums) on "Weird" add to song texture rather than reaching a climax, or providing hooks, a recurring feature of *Friend And Foe*. "Running" is an interesting sideshow- a two minute long stop-start affair accompanied by strange-voiced reassurances that "we'll make it before the cows come home". A paean to advice rejected in the past, "My My" has music to match the reminiscent and reflective feel of the lyrical content, is the album's second-half highlight.

This album is arduous and fun in equal measures. For example, see their "La Blogothèque" performance of "Wet And Rusting". "Post-Rock" done properly.

**Daniel Gray**



**Friend EP  
Grizzly Bear  
Warp**



It's hard to get excited about an EP that consists of barely any new songs, but luckily Grizzly Bear have managed to make *Friend* a worthwhile prospect. Zach Condon's much-hyped contribution to opener *Alligator* is imperceptible, but the song doesn't need any extra help. The

hushed harmonies and explosive crunches of percussion on this version make it the equal of anything on *Yellow House*. The new *Little Brother* takes the brave step of becoming more haunting. The shift in aesthetic brings a new focus to the lyrics, and confers a certain gravity that wasn't there in the original.

The cover of *He Hit Me* by The Crystals is brimming with tension, but it's the other bands covering the Grizzlies that will attract most neutrals. CSS's version of *Knife* manages to strip away all the emotion of the original, leaving a disaffected synth-rock carcass. Atlas Sound acquit themselves better with their

clockwork and reverb version, and Band of Horses and My Dads is just bizarre enough to work. It may seem all filler on paper, but one band's trash is another's gold. Grizzly Bear's bin makes for good listening.

**Karl Mc Donald**

**Disco Four  
Pet Shop Boys  
Parlophone**



The fourth in a series of remix albums, Pet Shop Boys' *Disco Four* is, as suggested in the title, another pop-tastic offering from the Kings of Camp. Featuring extended dance remixes of artists such as Madonna, Yoko Ono and, er, Rammstein, *Disco 4* will not disappoint pop addicts in need of a disco fix. Opening with a glitzy remix of the Killers *Read My Mind*, it's clear from the beginning that this album is going sway very little from PSBs signature style, blending disco pop with electro stylings and space age synths. By casting aside practically everything but the original vocals, PSBs not so much remix but rebuild the featured tracks on the album as their own. This is no bad thing. Their 'electro mix' of Yoko Ono's *Walking on Thin Ice* is superb while their own *I'm With Stupid* 'Maxi-Mix' shows that the PSBs are still capable of

producing excellent, dancefloor friendly electro pop.

Although not exactly original, *Disco 4* is a fine pop album that will appeal to both

fans and new listeners alike.  
**Olwyn Fagin**

**Jacknife Lee  
Jacknife Lee  
Motown**



Music producer Jacknife Lee knows how to tickle my bits. With his eponymous fourth album, he has borrowed filthy underlying sounds more akin to artists like Whitey and The Whip. Jacknife Lee seamlessly fuses a good old rock aesthetic with a contemporary electro beat. 'What You Want' is a pounding electro-rock song with a mission to get the Indie kids deep down and dirty while opener 'Fear of Nothing', proclaims the uninhibited nature of the album. With lyrics such as "filthy, surging, finger, burning" you know where this music is leading to. It may at times sound over-produced. *Jacknife Lee* is knicker-droppingly good with enough nasty electro sounds that would make other dance rock outfits like Justice and Digitalism seem harsh in their sound.

**Conor O'Neill**

**Robert Wyatt  
Comicopera  
Domino**



Wyatt's artfully disorganised album is divided into three acts-*Lost in the Noise/ the Here and the Now/ Away with the Fairies*- which swerve manically from genre to genre. The vocals on the melodramatic opener -'Stay Tuned'- are reminiscent of Zero Seven, while rough electronica ('Out of the Blue') is preceded by Scarborough Fair-era Simon and Garfunkel ('A Beautiful Peace'). The final act of the album is more cohesive, and chooses to focus on pared-down world music, with echoes of earlier tracks weaving their way back in ('Fragment'). It shouldn't work, but it does. This is due, perhaps, to the overwhelming array of producers/collaborators behind the record. Brian Eno (who is credited with playing the 'Enotron'), Paul Weller and Phil Manzanera all feature on the album in some shape or form. Had this record been made by a musician with less conviction, it would have sounded contrived. Thankfully, Wyatt's distinctive vocal range, and musical fearlessness combine to make *Comicopera* a challenging, and rewarding diversion.

**Ailbhe Malone**

**Kill All Your Darlings  
David Geraghty  
Decal Records**



There seems to be

a wealth of talent within the ranks of BellX1. On one side we have the electro-pop Tim O'. Donovan a.k.a Neosupervital. On the other we have the melancholic charm of David Geraghty. Where Neosupervital want make you dance in your sharp suits and high heels, David wants you to pull up a stool beside the bar and tell you stories of love lost, gained and lost again.

*Kill All Your Darlings* is story of life and love wrapped cosily in lush layers of piano and strings. Songs such as "Back Seat" are earnest yet mournful. There are some cheerful songs like "Fear To The Hitcher", however this is the sound of a man with a heavy heart.

David Geraghty has created an album full of heart and soul with a delicate layer of hope. Coupled with his velvety husky voice, *Kill All Your Darlings* is a little gem albeit a fragile one. So pull up that stool and listen to the stories which David has to sing.

**Conor O'Neill**

**God Save The Clientele  
The Clientele  
Pointy Records**



The Clientele are a band which have no bad songs, but no outstanding ones. For such an outfit, albums are capitally important. Luckily for them *God Save The Clientele* is a pretty strong one.

Their lyrics are poetic, wistful and consciously pretty, and their lush music somewhere between dream and twee pop, incorporating psychadelia without ever raising the suspicion that any band member has ever ingested narcotics. Ever.

Choruses never rise into giddy stratospheres; songs flow smoothly from one to the next. To look for stand-out strong points is to miss the purpose of the album. The Clientele are trying to take you into their universe of forests trails, sedate seashores and, most importantly, safety. If you spend time with this album they are sure to succeed. *God Save The Clientele* is a perfectly timed release- it's one for winter evenings in front of log fires, and sleepy Sunday mornings.

**Daniel Gray**

**Battle and Victory  
Nancy Elizabeth  
Timbreland**



Nancy Elizabeth is an instrumental folk artist who plays the dulcimer and the harp. The Joanna Newsome comparison is inevitable, so let's just get it out of the way:

if Joanna Newsome is a surgeon, Nancy Elizabeth is Lorraine Bobbit. Nancy Elizabeth's instrumentals, while not entirely unpleasing to the ear, are rather dull, and at some point they all start to blur together. Her voice is mediocre at best, and her lyrics are slightly less.

The third track 'Coriander', consists of a chorus of one word 'Coriander.' Nancy Elizabeth singing a Celtic-style folk song about an Indian spice is more than confusing, it's slightly annoying. It only gets

worse from there. Track four is a mystical, Indian gonging experience, with a piping noise in the back round adds a circus-like undercurrent to the entire experience.

The ultimate low point comes during the song 'Electric' as she moan/sings, "take us all today", and it's difficult not to imagine a group of glassy eyed cult members as they raise their glass of magic cool aid and hop on the comet.

**Sarah Harman**

**The Moving Frontier  
Pram  
Domino**



Nightmarish, intelligent electro pop groups from are not known for their longevity. This makes Pram's newest offering, 17 years after their formation, worthy of some reverence. To their credit, Pram have managed to avoid sounding dated. *The Moving Frontier* pulls together various parts of the music landscape that do not meet very often, creating a strangely atmospheric whole. Throughout the record, movie soundtracks are called to mind, not least in opening instrumental *The Empty Quarter*. Spaghetti western guitar and dramatic organs intermingle, leaving a tune Quentin Tarantino might use if he ever made a Western. There is also more straight-forward lo-fi electro in evidence, notably on *Salt & Sand* and *Beluga*. Lyrics, on the five songs where there are vocals, seem to indicate a general unease with modern existence. Perhaps the most memorable line comes early in the album: "Everyone wants a date with the city surveyor". Who can argue with that sort of insight? Pram set their stall out, unphased by the music others are making at the moment. Their little world is worth investigating.

**Karl Mc Donald**

**Parades  
Efterklang  
Rumraket**



Denmark's Masters of atmosphere return with their second album, the enlightening

*Parades* which continues in the same musical fairytale realm where debut album *Tripper* left us a few years ago.

Layered to sensual perfection with abundant violins and sparse drums peppered with a few string pricks and somber voices, it is an album that drips with emotion and atmosphere but is never overwhelmed by it. One almost feels like being called to attention by the sparse, militaristic drumming on songs such as 'Maison de Reflexion'. However this is an

album of strange beauty. 'Polygyne' feels like a trip down a nightmarish rabbit hole which still somehow makes you feel good. *Parades* is a vibrant cocktail of sounds and emotions that will warm your heart.

**Conor O'Neill**

**Places  
Georgie James  
Saddle Creek**



Georgie James are not a stereotypical Saddle Creek band. Usually signing bands of either Emo or Folk strains, the Nebraskan label has

taken a risk with putting out this album. Going E.L.O. and Simon & Garfunkel as influences could turn many off the band before so much as listening to a song, but taking a leap of faith with this band might just pay off for both the listener and Saddle Creek.

The songs are straightforward, the artwork unpretentious, and the lyrics bordering on banal, but there's a charm to *Places* that sucks you in and arrests you until the last note of handclapped closer (and album highlight) *Only Cause You're Young*.

If you were a fan of band member John Davis' previous dance-punk outfit Q and Not U, *Places* isn't going to make you wish the band never reforms. However, if you're looking for pop-rock thrills and memorable melodies, Georgie James will leave you hooked.

**Daniel Gray**

**Tiger, My Friend  
Psapp  
Domino**



Psapp's re-release of their 2004 album *Tiger My Friend* record shows the band's first foray into 'toytronica', using squeaking cats ('About Fun') and beer cans as instruments ('Tiger, My Friend'). Pretty arrangements ('The Counter') draw in the ear, while the clean production of the record allows electronic glitches to blend with more traditional strings, without feeling like it's trying too hard. It's Galia Durant's vocal delivery; however, that raises

the album from insouciant debut, to a record worthy of re-issue. When she enticingly sings 'it's only ourselves...but I like it that way' on 'Curuncula', a thousand collective hearts rise and fall, yet on the following track ('King Kong') her tone becomes menacing-'one of us is leaving, and it won't be me'- though never any less provocative. Though their later work -*The Only Thing I Have Ever Wanted*- favours a less polished sound, one hopes that this re-issue will provoke

Psapp to return to their glistening, whimsical and exquisite roots.

**Ailbhe Malone**



**Overpowered  
Roisin Murphy  
Echo**

Roisin Murphy is a woman of understated charisma. Quietly and contentedly wallowing just under the radar, her debut album *Ruby Blue* was an idiosyncratic blend of jazz, break beats and pop, but with her sophomore outing, Roisin has gone all disco. *Overpowered* is a much stronger, ultimately more lucid piece of

work. Gone are the more out there sounds and pin comes in the mirrorball. Aptly named "Mirrorball" burns with a techno intensity not seen since the early nineties while recent single "Let Me Know" is Kim Syms Mark II. It is in the pumping techno sounding "Movie Star" we see the star herself showing her mettle and potential.

*Overpowered* is a giant platform shoe step above her debut and a thoroughly enjoyable album. Long may Roisin continue to entertain us in her own flamboyant way.

**Conor O'Neill**



**The Pyramids  
The Pyramids  
Domino**

The Pyramids consist of Sam Windett and Mark Cleveland of the Archie Bronson Outfit. The intention of Windett and Cleveland was to recapture the energy of 60s American Garage bands like The Sonics and the Monks, and in this they have succeeded to a degree. The music was largely written over the course of one weekend and recorded in two sessions in a barn with overhanging microphones catching Windett and Cleveland running through their newly written songs, often for the second or third time. There is an immediacy and enthusiasm perceptible on the album that is refreshing."Manitou" hints at a monochrome White Stripes, but eventually through repetition and drone

ends up sounding more like early Doors. Debut single "Hunch Your Body, Love Somebody" is an exception, recalling the Stooges at their height. Its tune buried under the wall of guitar noise and the desperation of Windett's vocals renders almost it catchy. It's unfortunately not enough to save The Pyramids this time around.

**Karl Mc Donald**

**The Throne Of The Third Heaven Of**

**The Nations' Millennium General  
Le Loup  
Hardly Art**



Washington DC's Le Loup have all the hallmarks of the Next Big Thing. In their arsenal is a sound like a conglomeration of North America's indie aristocracy (Arcade Fire, Animal Collective and Sufjan Stevens predominantly) that they yet craft it into something wholly unique, lyrics about cataclysm and destruction, and, most importantly, some seriously nifty artwork. And since when did a clunky album name and exclamation

mark heavy song titles ever set anyone back? The Throne is a hypnotic listen. For the work of a seven-piece collective the songs are decidedly sparse, revolving around a simple banjo riff around which echoing chanted vocals and some electronics circulate. The lyrics are based on Dante's Inferno, which would be overwhelmingly pretentious were they not so affecting and knowingly grandiose. Opener Canto I is a vulnerable confession interspersed with "like"s and pauses that keep its lofty subject of personal hell grounded to earth. Le Loup: on the lips of hipsters near you soon.

**Dan Gray**

**Two Gallants  
Two Gallants  
Saddle Creek**



A self-titled third album was always going to be a return to basics. That's what self-titled albums are for. Two Gallants seem to like playing up their Southern blues and folk influences, but in reality what they make is blanched alt-country. The album is more in the tradition of Conor Oberst than of Robert Johnson or Woody Guthrie. This isn't at all surprising considering their berth on Saddle Creek. Most of the songs float by without much to distinguish them. The highlight is the opening track, *The Dealer* which has a certain discordance, and tinges of Malkmus. Other than this, even piling on the emotion on *Fly Low Carrion Crow* or picking up the beat on *Despite What*

*You've Been Told* can't save the album from blending into standard Saddle Creek fare. Nothing new or original is provided. There's a sense that they don't particularly want to provide anything new or original either. And that's fine. It's not that Two Gallants aren't enjoyable - they're just no effort.

**Karl Mc Donald**

**Dusty Rhodes And The River Band**

**First You Live  
Side One Dummy**



Herman Melville wrote "it's better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation". After a minute of listening to *First You Live* it is crystal clear that Dusty Rhodes and the River Band have never read any Melville. However, lack of originality hasn't held back most of today's successful bands, so why should it hold back Dusty Rhodes and the River Band? Because their singer sounds like a South Park imitation of Kings Of Leon's singer, in short. *First You Live*'s first forty seconds are wholly prom-

ising, with lavish instrumentation and a snooty pub singalong. Then the title track's vocals kick in. Dustin Apodaca's voice is one that belongs in snot-nosed skater punk, and all The River Band's lush Band-esque layers of guitar, violin and keys cannot save this album of well-worn gospel-folk clichés (there's something terribly unconvincing about the line "I can't wait to be free, oh I can't wait to leave Tennessee" when it's coming from a Californian).

**Dan Gray**

**Hourglass  
Dave Gahan  
Virgin/Mute**



What have we come to expect from Depeche Mode over the years? Dark, grainy electro rock grooves and broody lyrics weighed down with melancholy and regret. If this is what you're looking for then the latest offering from Mode front man Dave Gahan is just the thing for you. If, however, it's originality you crave *Hourglass* will most definitely leave you unsatisfied.

There's a niggling sense of something missing, it's almost as if Gahan has spent too long perfecting his trademark dramatic style with the result that he's become a parody of himself. The pristine production of the album strangely seems to take away from the quality of the songs which makes the whole thing seem a bit pointless really. There's plenty for fans on tracks such as 'Deeper and Deeper' and

'Use You', but at the end of the day, there's nothing here we haven't heard before.

**Olwyn Fagin**

**Battles  
Tonto  
Lable: Warp**



With a shimmer of delicate notes tingling through the introduction, Battles launch into the relentless and possessive track Tonto. Following on from their critically acclaimed release Atlas, Tonto has no easy task of rivalling its predecessor's success. Although lacking the brilliantly ambiguous lyrics of Atlas, Tonto tumbles through its melody, snagging itself on idiosyncratic sounds until Tyondai Braxton's hollers lead us to the song's superb climax. Finally the jingle of bells leads its sedated bass lumbering towards a shrill pitched conclusion.

Remixes include one by The Field whose only triumph seems to be forcing you to endure seven minutes of what sounds like an old printer noisily chewing its way through fragments of the song. Another by Four Tet remains more loyal to the original song and it's all the better for it giving us a bass-soaked Tonto worthy of the dancefloor.

Also included are two live performances, one of Tonto, the other of Leyendecker, which allows Battles to smugly display how amazing they really are. Lastly the Hip-Hop inoculated remix of Leyendecker will leave you shamelessly chanting 'I live in the hood' over the seditious bass and vocals of Joell Ortiz.

**Sauna O'Brien**



**The Modern Tribe  
Celebration  
4AD**

For all the layers of sound, and there are a lot, *The Modern Tribe* feels surprisingly lean. The second album from Celebration (whose side/ previous projects include Love Life and Jaks) at times can sound just like a lot of noise. On tracks such as *Evergreen* and *Heartbreak*, Celebration gets it right. Both cuts have dreamy airs, *Evergreen* with its chimes and *Heartbreak* with its brassy horns that add a playful dimension and a much-needed fullness to the album as a whole. While Celebration shows their eccentricity on tracks like the breathy post-punk *Pony*, cuts like *Hands off my Gold* and *Wild Cats* careen off course creating messiness rather than the haunting peculiarity

pervading the rest of the album. Katrina Ford's vocals are enjoyably androgynous, ranging from baritone languishing to piercing laments, yet seem to be in competition for airtime. Celebration's rhythm section appears to dictate stylistic direction without regard for Ford's vocal wanderlust. Not terribly memorable, *The Modern Tribe* might find itself best-played, late night whilst dancing, sandwiched in between two of your favorite new wave songs.

**E.M. Gallagher**

**LP  
Holy Fuck**



Profanity shows a lack of intelligence, or so the latter-day saying goes. Holy Fuck have set themselves up to thwart conventional wisdom then. This is the sound of a band testing out how far toy keyboards can be pushed before they just give up. They never sound twee either, unlike most Casio-bangers. It's krautrock's holiday in punk-funk Brooklyn, played out on cheap electronics with heaps of ambition. As well as the frenetic pump the album

hinges around. *Lovely Allen* uses Owen Pickett's string arrangement to create a sort of lo-fi M83 jam. *Royal Gregory* is the one Antics will be spinning if anyone shows signs of ever tiring of *Room On Fire*. The iron-clad drumming and swathes of human-sounding synthesis pull a dance track out of a band who should really be too lo-fi for that. Holy Fuck are from Toronto, shockingly enough, and really make any claims that there is a Canadian sound seem very ill-informed. This could be a dark horse for album of the year.

**Karl McDonald**

**So This Is Goodbye (2 disc reissue)**



**Junior Boys  
Domino**

It is a rule of thumb of the serious music fan to beware of reissues without anything significantly new. This repackaging of the Canadian duo's latest album has remixes and live Peelesque "iTunes session" tracks, but it is still the same ten songs. It's lucky then, that the album was so good in the first place.

Junior Boys' music is a mesh of cold disinterested beats with singer Jeremy Goldspan's whispery vocals. It is dance music for the bedroom, not the dancefloor. Goldspan's ultra-frank lyrics and his vocal melodies make tracks like "The Equalizer" and "FM" stand up and speak in a way dance music rarely does.

Of the remixes, Carl Craig brings "Like A Child" to Detroit techno territory, in a hypnotic sort of way. Hot Chip take the shocking step of making "In The Morning" sound like Hot Chip, and various other remixers lend their interpretations without actually adding anything major to the songs

The iTunes sessions are interesting to hear, because Junior Boys are mostly

cold synths and static beats in the studio. The human element, mainly manifested through Goldspan's guitar playing, brings a new dimension to the songs. To be honest, it makes them sound a little like Human League. But in a good way.

**Karl McDonald**

**The Royal We  
The Royal We  
Geographic Music**



The Royal We are a six piece indie pop outfit hailing from the musical hot bed of Glasgow city. Their self titled debut

album (which, incidentally, is also to be their last) is at 20 minutes length a short but sweet offering from Scotland's "It" band of the last year. Combining astute pop lyrics of love and heartbreak with energetic tunes, the group produce fun and quirky songs with an edge.

The album is packed with witty, high energy songs delivered perfectly by vocalist Jihae Simmons. Channelling the 'no shit' attitude and punky vocals of a young Debbie Harry on tracks such as *That Ain't My Sweet Love* and *I Hate Rock n Roll*, Simmons embodies old school rock and roll spunk. The album ends with an excellent cover of Chris Isaac's *Wicked Game*, showing the band's ability to stand out from today's increasingly samey indie crowd.

The Royal We are indie as it should be. Fast-paced, energetic and always on the ball, their album is fun and unpretentious, just like the band themselves.

**Olwyn Fagin**

**Daxaar  
Steve Reid Ensemble  
Domino**



Steve Reid, a veteran improvisational jazz drummer collaborates with seven other artists on this new release, which was recorded over three days in Africa. The ensemble also features Steve Reid's self-confessed soul mate Kieran Hebden (Four Tet), who has already enjoyed suc-

cessful collaborations with Reid.

The album opens with the cheerful melody of the appropriately named *Welcome* a song that allows the warm vocals of Isa Kouyate to melt over the rhythm. Other tracks like *Dabronxxar* entertain; with its bass heavy, keyboard prominent riff and Steve Reid's emphatic drumming. *Don't Look Back*, the album's concluding song allows Kieran Hebden to exercise his aptitude for all things electronica, which except for the echoing indulgence of *Jiggy Jiggy* is kept to a subdued minimum.

*Daxaar* is an album a lot more accessible than Steve Reid and Keiran Hebden's previously released volumes of *The Exchange Sessions* and will appeal to a wider market than perhaps those of the Experimental, Free Jazz orientated.

**Sauna O'Brien**

**It's Easy To Be Alive  
You Just Are  
Star Little Thing  
Rollin Cloud Records**



Star Little Thing are brimming with a certain Dublin charm that permeates this album, blending the sounds of early 90's dance and Irish rock. This creates a sound that elevates them above the crammed monotony of many a local band. They have fashioned a debut album with some great songs but a few unnecessary fillers. In songs such as the recent single 'Where Is The Child Gone' one hears the latent potential of the band. It is a single layered with melancholy, menace and hope covered in a dance rock beat. While in a number of songs you feel they have over-salted the soup, Star Little Thing have concocted a commendable debut for an Irish band. *It's Easy To Be Alive You Just Are* is the sound of a band with a lot of promise.

**Conor O'Neill**

**Soulwax.** Most of the remixes we've made for other people over the years except for the one for Einstürzende Neubauten because we lost it and a few we didn't think sounded good enough or just didn't fit in length-wise, but including some that are hard to find because either people forgot about them or simply because they haven't been released yet, a few we really love, one we think is just ok, some we did for free, some we did for money, some for ourselves without permission and some for friends as swaps but never on time and always at our studio in Ghent.

**Remixes  
Soulwax  
Parlaphone**

Brothers David and Stephen Dewaele and Stefan Van Leuvan and Steve Slingeneyer return as the much

acclaimed Soulwax in this collection of re-workings not so briefly described in

their 104 word album title, which tells us what to expect from this double cd compendium. In recent years the Belgium foursome have impressed us with their genre bending drug inspired releases, their most successful being *Any Minute Now* and its extended dancefloor accommodated remix *Nite Versions*.

David and Stephen Dewaele also continue to subdue their boredom beneath the guise of 2 Many DJ's, where they have received much critical acclaim mainly due to their hugely successful release *As Heard On Radio Soulwax Pt. 2* which succeeded in demolishing music snobbery by introducing such bizarre re-workings as the mash up of Destiny's Child and Dolly Parton onto the dancefloor.

Now in this double cd both sides of their split personality collide to create an impressive assembly of dance inducing mixes. The first cd exposes us to some well-needed Soulwax remixes collected over the years.

Initiated by the Gossip's ruthless *Standing in the way of control* this eclectic mix sees Soulwax drag the likes of Sugababes, Muse and Lords of Acid all onto the same dancefloor. Robbie Williams also makes an appearance amongst these in the brilliant and bleep saturated remix of *Lovelight*, which is surprisingly one of the standout remixes on this album. Other highlights include Justice's *Phantom PT2* and LCD Soundsystem's *Daft Punk Is Playing at My House*, which sees samples of various Daft Punk songs cheekily hacked into it. Soulwax also include a fusion of Human Resource and 808 State, a remix that evokes images of fields, dense with rave worshippers united by a confused elation and yellow smiley faces emblazoned on oversized sweaty t-shirts.

The second cd sees 2 Many DJ's remixing these remixes (stay with me) into a awe inducing set including as the album title explicitly informs us, remixes 'that are hard to find because either people have forgot about them or simply because they haven't been released'.

Remixes such as Felix Da Housecat's instructive *Rocket Ride*, Ladytron's brilliantly youth embittered *Seventeen* and Playgroup who lustily suggest to 'Make it Happen. Among all this deviant euphoria Hot Chip provide us with a well-needed synthy lull before its laidback vocals are strimmered apart by an aggressive base.

The set concludes with the flawless remix of DJ Shadow's *6 Days* where the B-52's defiant guitar riff perseveres to the end of this compilation.

This release further endorses Soulwax's dance credentials to an imposing degree proving that they really do know how to spoil us with music that could provoke even the most folk-ed up into uncoordinated displays of ecstasy.

This is a fantastic remix album that threatens to instigate widespread boycotting of clubs in favour of Soulwax sound-

tracked house parties.  
**Shauna O'Brien**

**Oblivion with Bells  
Underworld**

Underworld, the era defining duo famed for their techno infused anthems, most notably their infamous

Trainspotting cameo *Born Slippy*, return with a new release to coincide with their recent string of highly praised gigs.

On this album we see them shy away from their "Lager Lager" days and take a chance on some nice layering that creates broad ambient flavoured tracks like *Good Morning Cockerel*. In addition to this, songs like *Glam Bucket* certainly do the album title justice as its insistent bleeps dot its ethereal synthy climax.

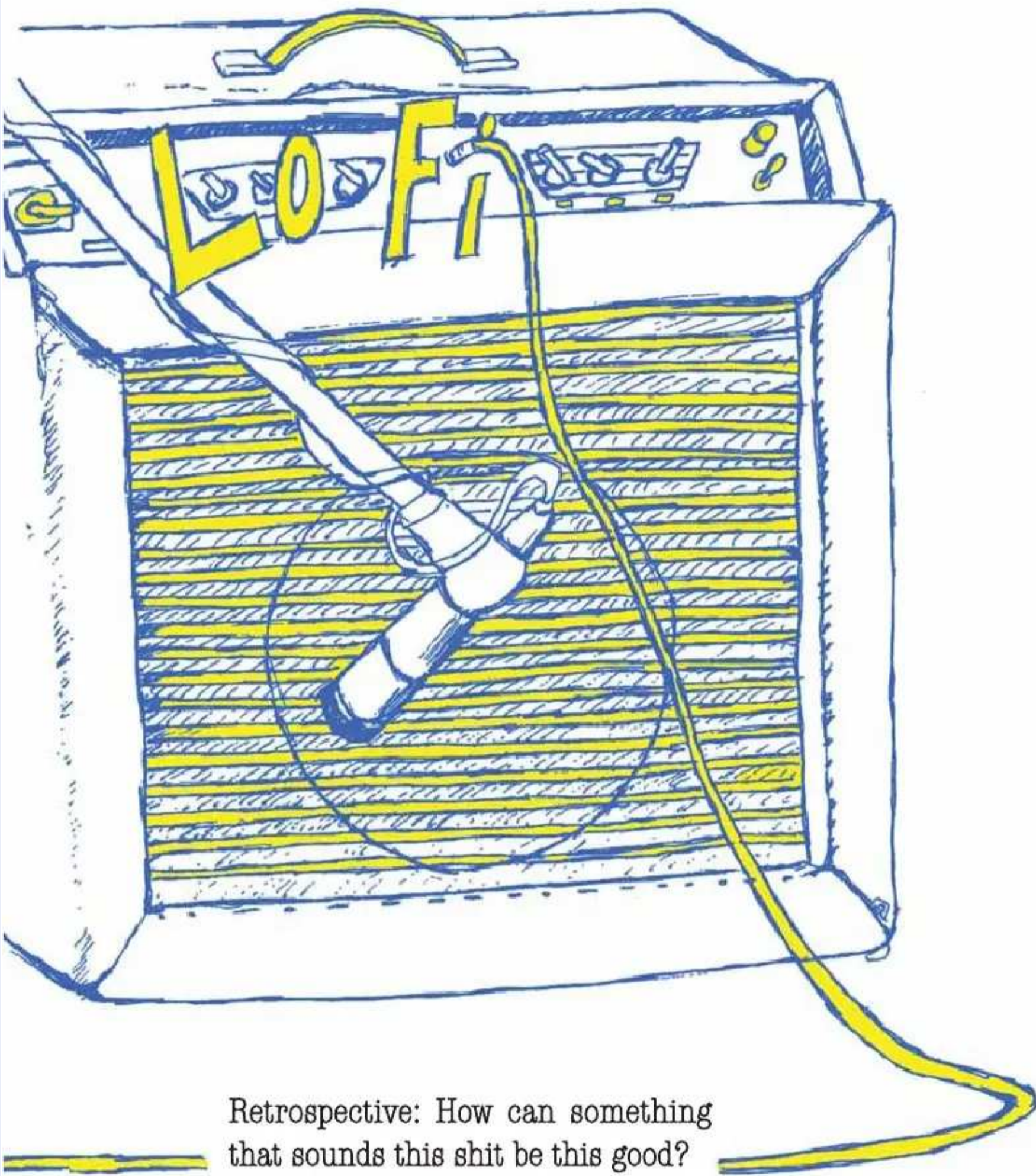
The inclusion of the beautifully illuminating melody of *To Heal* taken from the soundtrack of Danny Boyle's *Sunshine* saves this album from its weaker moments such as *Faxed Invitation* whose organ conclusion arrives a little too late for complete redemption.

For fear of neglecting their former fans, the album recalls typically sounding Underworld-esque tracks such as *Crocodile* and *Beautiful Burnout* with their trance like repetition, monotone

vocals and floor shaking basslines.

**Shauna O'Brien**





Retrospective: How can something  
that sounds this shit be this good?  
(A brief history of Lo Fi indie rock)

A friend once asked me, "how come so many of your favourite records sound so shite? Its like they were recorded for 50p!" And he was right, they do. In fact, not only do they sound like they were recorded for 50p but at least one of them ('Vampire on Titus' by Guided by Voices) is so shoddily recorded it may as well have been screamed into a banjaxed Fisherprice tape recorder on a windy cliff. Well, its 'cos a large chunk of my CD collection is devoted to the crackly magic and haphazard musical charms cast by lo-fi recording artists.

What exactly is lo-fi then? Well, if you were dreary and took the term at face value, you might say it simply means low fidelity, as in music that was recorded on equipment by bands who for

financial or other reasons could not afford to record their music on high fidelity equipment. Lo-fi, you might then argue, has been around for as long as recording itself. You might argue that all the great bockety garage rock from the 60s and the scuzzy DIY stylings of punk were lo-fi because of the cheap way in which such music was recorded. But its not as simple as that. Otherwise lo-fi would be merely a style of music determined by practical necessity, whereas in reality it quickly grew beyond that to become an aesthetic for bands to wilfully aspire towards. It became a genre in and of itself that flourished and peaked in a whoosh of cassette tape hiss in the early to mid-nineties. Indeed, looking back to the genre's early-nineties peak, practically all the best American indie records, including

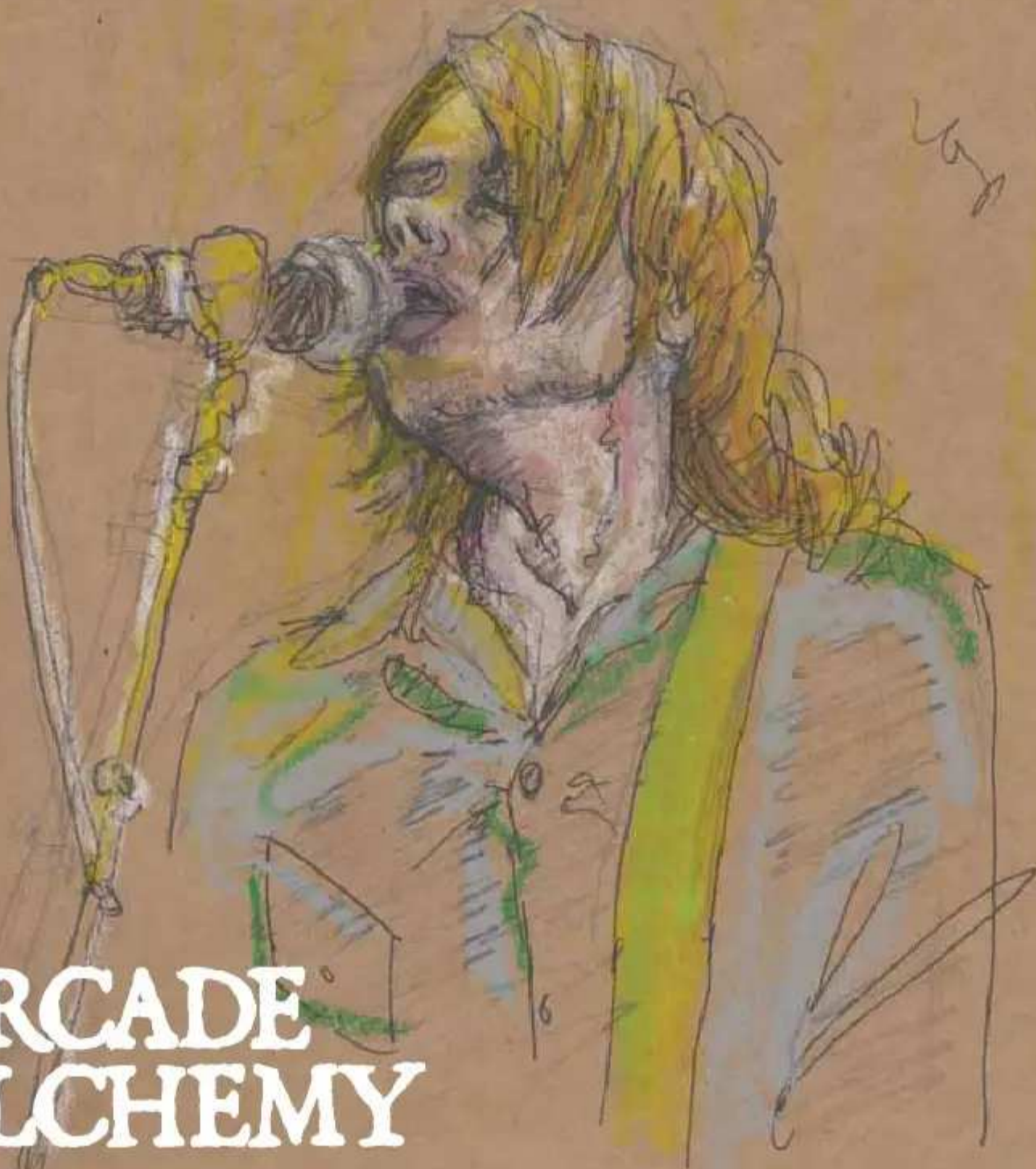
Pavement's *Slanted and Enchanted*, Guided By Voices' *Bee Thousand* and Sebadoh's *Ill*, seem like they are barely held together by sellotape and pritt-stick. If these bands were plasterers they wouldn't bother with polyfilla because hey, the cracks in the plasterwork were more interesting. Lo-fi was also a bit political. It was a determined kick against the bloated belly of mainstream alternative rock, which in those days was all post-grunge MTV drivel padded out by millions of dollars worth of big studio turd polishing. As Stephen Malkmus aptly sang about some big grunge bands of the day on Pavement's lo-fi call to arms, 'Range Life' "I don't understand what they mean/ And I could really give a fuck."

Unlike other more tightly defined genres like shoegaze, there is no real unifying lo-fi sound. Rather, it's the way in which things were recorded that holds the genre together. The musical styles vary from the detuned and decidedly wonky guitar fuzz that ultimately makes Pavement such a sublime acquired taste to Calvin Johnson's baritone singing over *Beat Happening's* austere musical structures. However, for my money, if there is one band that could speak for them all and represent the genre in some sort of United Nations style musical Security Council (hah, imagine that!), then that band is *Guided By Voices* (*Sebadoh* fans are bound to disagree with this, but if they want to really work this out I am willing to meet them in the car-park of Whelans to sort it out properly). Here was a band of seedy looking thirty-something dudes with beer-guts who recorded most of their best material while they were blind drunk in a laundry room below one of their gafs. Led by *The Who* and *Beatles* obsessed primary school teacher Robert Pollard, Guided By Voices used some unbelievably ropey equipment to record music that at its best, climbs to the rarified heights of the best work from those 1960s bands he idolized so much. Although it takes some leap of the imagination to describe much of their polished later material as lo-fi, Guided by Voices' blinding early run of four wonderful albums from '*Propeller*' through '*Alien Lanes*' are shot through with the idiosyncrasies and imperfections that make lo-fi such a love it or hate it genre. You see, one man's imperfection is another's accidental wonder. The fact is that *Bee Thousand* (to take one

*Guided By Voices* release) sounds positively destroyed with tape hiss, badly overdubbed vocals, too much treble, out of tune guitar parts, unfiltered sounds of studio doors slamming, and (half way through one track) a band member snoring drunkenly. Yet these things only add to the record's legend. Its hard to explain, but all that ramshackle madness eventually worms its way into how you experience the album, finally becoming as important a part of the listening experience as the fine music itself. It gives things textures, depths, and a unique sense of time and place that crackles and sparks. In fact, *Bee Thousand* is miraculous in that a huge part of its brilliance is wrapped up in how shite it sounds. As a musical statement it is a million miles from the edgeless studio polish and easy to digest radio-friendly mixes that characterize much so-called 'alternative rock,' which are little more than mushed up liga for your ear-drums.

Of course, lo-fi does not begin and end with Guided By Voices, Pavement and Sebadoh. The big three are a gateway drug into a scene crammed with dozens of lesser known but fascinating groups such as Silver Jews, The Mountain Goats, The Olivia Tremor Control and the granddaddy of them all, Daniel Johnston. On this side of the Atlantic lots of artists took the baton and ran with it too, most notably The Beta Band, Badly Drawn Boy when he was in his early bedroom phase (in other words when he was worth giving a frick about) and more recently, Graham Coxon and our own Jape. What ties all these groups together might not just be the homespun nature of their recordings but something else too. It's the honesty that is inherent in recording music this way. Its impossible to cloak poor quality with the smoke and mirrors of studio trickery. Lo-fi brings the listener's attention back to where it should be. Back to the song itself.

**Words: Darragh MacCausland**  
**Illustration: Brendan McGuirk**



# ARCADE ALCHEMY

## Backtracks 2: Will Butler, "His Brother's Band," and the Old Flame

Only rarely does a band reach a stage of recognition where they no longer need to be named, let alone introduced. "A certain band from Montreal" has become a code name — used in the first issue of *Analogue*, but in common trade by various DJs as well — for only one band from Montreal. They join the likes of Radiohead and U2, which defined Oxford and Dublin in much the same way. The difference, of course, is that Arcade Fire has only released two full-length albums and an EP, and has been on the radar for about three years. The Oxford gentlemen will mark fifteen years of music next year, and the Dublin lads now have twenty-six. All three bands have been called the best in the world by reputable music magazines at assorted high points of their careers. This is either a lot of pressure on one relatively young, talented, and earnest group

of people, or it is a truly twisted new level of hype. It is tempting to put it down to the latter, and say that Arcade Fire is a fluke of the market, that rare case when something packaged and recommended as "good music" convinces everyone at once. Top-ten lists are mostly an echo chamber; the right critic makes an album great. Agents and

companies manufacture success, and this time they did it well. It's certainly true that there has been no shortage of hype. In some music circles, this has provoked the first Great Arcade Fire Backlash, because for the insecure connoisseur, popularity is a sure sign that something is wrong with the music.

It turns out, however, that Arcade Fire is an even rarer case than perfect market synergy. It is the case where the music, the albums, the band, and the live show are in fact that good. It is the case where Bono hears you and decides he wants to use your song as entrance music on his tour, and later asks your band to open for his. (You are able to say no.) It is the case where David Bowie buys up boxfuls of your debut album to give away to his friends for Christmas, then comes and sings with you in Radio City Music Hall. This type of success is not

about what management, record companies, and marketers did well. It's about the transcendent power of what the musicians carved from noise and silence.

What is the role of music journalism when confronted with this achievement? Naturally, the impulse is to convince as many people as possible to take notice and listen. That task



done, however, what can be added to what the band has already done? Who would rather read a review of a great album than listen to a great album? Criticism is always secondary to the thing itself. The risk is creating more distrust and exhaustion with excessive praise that the music manifestly does not need. It is thus with no small amount of trepidation that I enter the

fray, add to the flood of ink that has already been spilled in the name of Arcade Fire, and tell a more personal story about the experience of their music. While the band may need no introduction, one of its members might. Also, I have a rather unusual story.

I met Will Butler because in the summer of 2004, he was travelling around Europe with my ex-girlfriend. All three of us had gone to the same college in Chicago, but I had graduated two years before them and moved to Berlin. In spite of the potentially awkward conditions, the terms were sufficiently amicable that I could happily host the two of them in my apartment, cooking them food and giving tours of the city, for three days. I had a guitar sitting in the house which was occasionally picked up by various residents and played. From this, it emerged that Will was part of a band, mainly as a percussionist. We learned that we had both attended boarding school — rivals, actually — and that we shared an interest in poetry and Slavic languages and literature, both of which he was studying. There were some other obvious matters of taste in which we did not disagree. We laughed a great deal, walked a great deal, and found a certain comfort particular to recent strangers. It was a few months before *Funeral* was released in the United States, but I like to think that while he was in my home, he already had the songs kicking around in his head: his crazy drum, his brother's crazy voice.

I said goodbye to them as they boarded a high-speed train on the tracks at Zoologischer Garten, the same "Zoo Station" of a certain Dublin band with whom Will (and his brother) would later refuse to tour the world. I could write that I knew I'd see him again, or her, but there was at most only the mirage of a hope. I can no longer see clearly how I felt, standing there or walking home. I can hear songs that were in his head then only because they're in my head now. From here, all of us are infected with the awareness of what Will would become, just as this story is infected by its journalistic context, by the illustration on the cover.

Not having really paid attention, I missed any connection to Will Butler when America put *Funeral* on its top ten lists of 2004. As the album wasn't released in Ireland until 2005, I hadn't sought out or heard the music yet. I was in Chicago that January, fighting the snow and ordering a coffee, when Will and I saw each other through the window of a café. We caught up only briefly, and he said rather excitedly that he was leaving school to play in "his brother's band." I wrote down the name of this band, and said I would find it when I returned to Ireland.

I had no idea it would be so easy. When I walked into Tower on Wicklow Street, *Funeral* was posted on the wall, number sixteen on the European charts. I took it home and listened, but I can't say anything about this. I pored over the liner notes, looking for Will. He isn't there in person; he missed the photo shoot. He pointed out to me last month, during his impromptu visit to Trinity FM, that he is the extra shadow on the wall in the photo of the band. They had tried to add his face with Photoshop, but when that didn't work, they just gave him a shadow.

Will as a shadow: this is an inherently poetic idea.

Will's enjoyment of himself as a shadow: this is a characteristic of the poet, not the rock star. He did go back to school in the end and finished with a thesis of poems, which I've never read. I trust him to have found the right words. He laughs the laugh of the keen observer, relishing the small absurdities of modern life and, increasingly, the large absurdities of his own life. At his

level, it remains one of the most difficult and most demanding jobs in the world to play two days on, one day off. In particular, the degree of commitment for which the band has become justly famous means that each time they perform, they risk everything.

No man was ever less of a shadow on stage. Will climbs the truss, throws the drums, wears the helmet, and on occasion tackles others while playing. Somehow he never loses the rhythm. His catharsis becomes ours through sheer fearlessness, through absolute force; this is the essence of rock performance, and something unique to that art form. Offstage, even directly after a show, he is surprisingly quiet, and as generous and attentive as he was previously insane. He is loyal to the imperatives of form; in rock and in life, he is concentrated, energized, wide-eyed, awake. This just has different results in different worlds.

After their show in the Brixton Academy this March, I heard a man congratulate Will personally on his performance, and when I commented on how familiar he looked, Will simply said, "Oh, that was Ed from Radiohead." Oh, right. Ed. Will is unfazed; this is not uncommon. This is his job. He's doing what he knows how to do, what he needs to do. We might feel indebted, as I certainly do, but the band seems to lavish us with music with the sole expectation that we will enjoy it, that it will matter to us. Everyone has their own story of the music, and to remember the commonality and scale of this in the face of our own emotions is humbling.

There are two reasons that Bono, Bowie, and Ed are drawn to their shows. First, they all react at the same level that we do — like Will himself, these are people first, not celebrities — and they know the real when they hear it. Second, though, is the recognition of themselves. Arcade Fire is seriously attempting to fulfill its own potential. Through the mysterious alchemy of love and risk, this potential is virtually limitless; it's bigger than *Funeral* in the same way that Radiohead's was bigger than *The Bends*. Critics who say that *Neon Bible* is no *Funeral* are as short-sighted as the fans who kept asking for "Creep" a decade later. These questions may be worth asking when the band is on LP ten or LP twenty, continuing to make the music that summons them most urgently at that time, evolving their lineup, their style, their instrumentation. When I asked him whether the ever-growing success of the band is changing the tours, Will was enigmatically accurate, saying that this time is no more different than the other times were different.

It's a good lesson in fame, particularly in Will's fame, that nothing was particular or unique in our first meeting or in our most recent goodbye. People are people, and friendship is friendship. I can't help but think that Arcade Fire's success is rooted in this same realisation, and that this is one source of their authenticity on stage. Their own story is about marriage, brotherhood, friends, family, and loss. They have placed so much priority on reflecting this in the music that anyone similarly situated — that is, anyone who has suffered or rejoiced in the business of living — hears themselves.

Words: Nick Johnson

Illustrations: Sarah Jane Comerford

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THURSTON MOORE - Tripod Tuesday, December 4<sup>th</sup>

A HAWK AND A HACKSAW - Crowdaddy, Tuesday December 4<sup>th</sup>

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