

# Fantastic Playroom



NEW YOUNG PONY CLUB





## BLOC PARTY.

It was, thought Kele Okereke, good to be home. Bloc Party had been away, on tour, for almost two years. It had been a long time and a long way, but it was all great stuff: one million people had bought the band's debut album *Silent Alarm*. British music weekly *NME* made it their Album Of The Year in 2005. It was in the UK album charts for a thumping 69 weeks.

It wasn't just the London-based four-piece's home country that fell hard for their agit-jitter guitar pop. Bloc Party - Okereke, Russell Lissack, Gordon Moakes, Matt Tong - had received similar plaudits across Europe, and in Japan. They raced up the charts in 17 countries. In America, they were the only Nu Skool Brit guitar band who could sell out 8000-capacity venues.

With success like that, who wouldn't be happy? Nonetheless, Okereke was tired: Bloc Party's frenetic pace - on stage, within songs - had propelled them, fast round the world, but it also meant their frontman felt 'too many songs were at the same emotional pitch.

He was creatively frustrated: why couldn't this mad music fan make beats and sounds like Timbaland could make beats and sounds? And Okereke was hungover: he came back to East London and partied hard how else to cope with all the changes in his life, and that the

25-year-old witnessed going on around him on the streets that he hadn't walked in so many months?

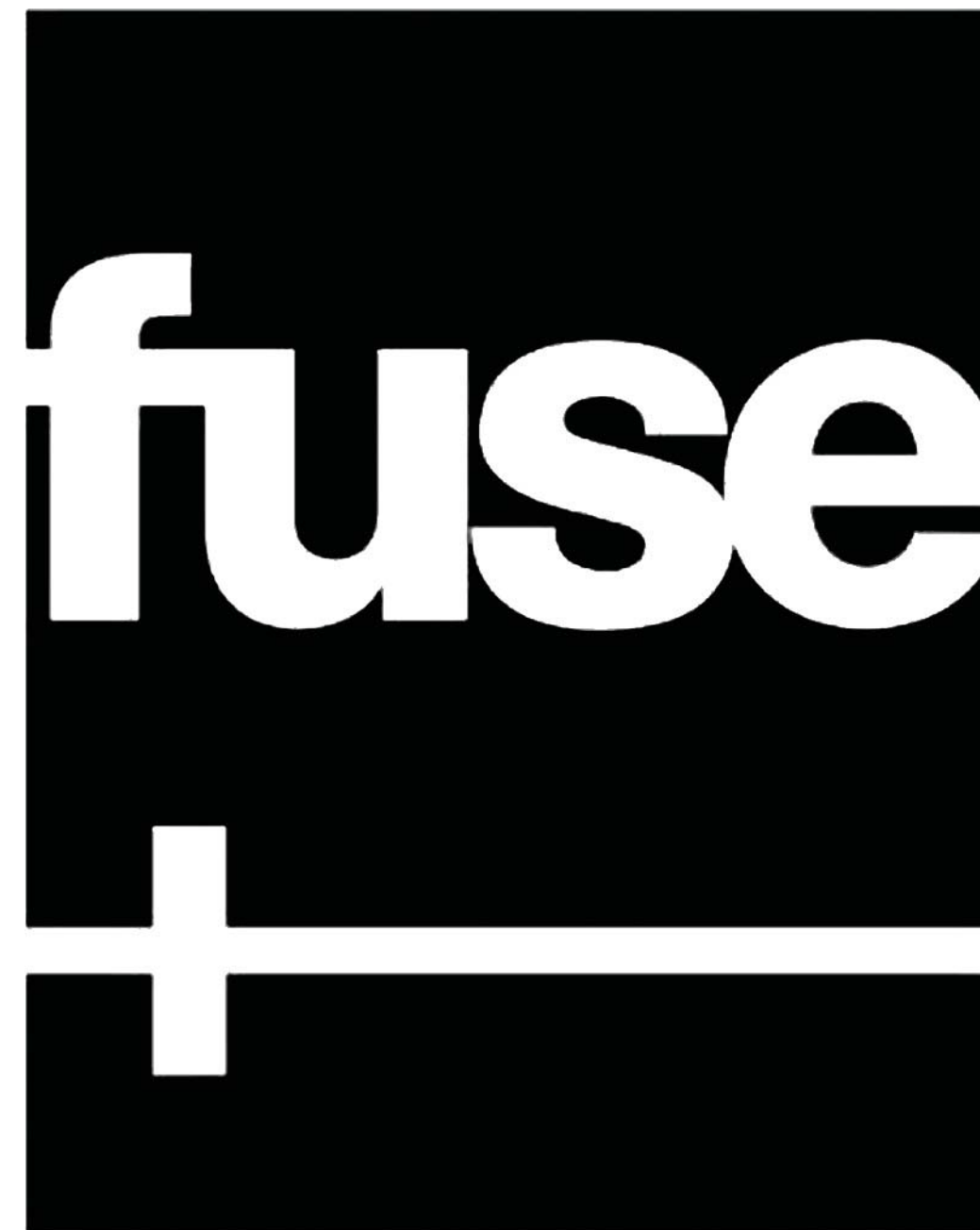
And yet, and yet... When, in early 2006, it came time to call a halt to the touring and begin work on their second album, Bloc Party's frontman and lyricist was inspired - rather than suffocated - by what he felt inside, and what he saw going on around him.

All the joy + pain + freedom + chaos + success + tension + cocaine + nutjobs + racism + headless hedonism that swirled around him,, and the clubs, pubs, and pavements of his Bethnal Green home. Kele Okereke took that positivity, that negativity, that energy, and trammelled it - forced it - into a bunch of new songs.

The result: an album that is an electrifying and staggeringly direct chronicle of post-millennial Britain. Okereke's bold, honest lyrics are set to ear-meltingly invigorating music. It's guitar rock, but not as we know it. It's Bloc Party, but not as we know them.

In collaboration with producer Jacknife Lee (U2, Snow Patrol; used to be in *Compulsion*, is alright now), they've created an album that bristles with slashed-up riffology, chop-changing rhythms, disco-techno and vocal confidence that can only be described as on-mic operatics. You've never heard Okereke sing and sound like this. Don't worry. Neither has he.

This is *A Weekend In The City*, Bloc Party's all-guns-blazing war on street-level terror. "East London is a vampire that sucks the joy right out of me." 'Is it a concept album?' Kele Okereke squirms. 'I baulk a little at the word "concept". It's such a loaded term these days. But I guess there were themes running throughout the songs. I really wanted to make sure this album had a real centre. Whereas the last one



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something that you don't expect with a Fall of Troy record. That's what our angle is. We want to destroy everyone's vision of what our band is in order to be able to do what we want, but not define ourselves so we can stay progressive and stay new."

Indeed there is no corralling this group of three boys who wrote and recorded their self-titled debut before they could legally vote and were signed to Equal Vision before they could legally drink, and there is certainly no containing the frenetic energy and raw sense of realism they pour into their music. The Fall of Troy is everything you wish bands would be- genuine, real and passionate- and Manipulator is everything you wish a record would be- unconventional, innovative and instilled with the lasting impression of amazement. "We're not going to conform," Erak concludes. "We're going to play whatever kind of music we want and we don't care what anybody says about it. I want people to take this record and I want them to manipulate it to what they think it is and make it their own."



didn't have a clear focus - I knew what I was aiming for a lot more with this record.'

Take SRXT. It's a hymnal, glorious song, and nowhere near as maudlin as a song named after an anti-depressant, and which discusses suicide, might be. But a blunt title begs a blunt question: is it autobiographical? 'When you write any song, you're expressing something from inside you.'

Thoughtful Okereke worked hard over many months on these lyrics - no moon/June/heroin spoon platitudes here. His candour has even taken him by surprise. He's still, in a way, marshalling his thoughts on some of the words. But he's clear on the fact that he wanted to

this an unashamed celebration of the liberation of hedonism?

'Yes,' Okereke begins. 'And no., After Silent Alarm I realised I could have tried harder - so with this record I thought, "I'll be honest about everything." All the ugly thoughts, all the things you wouldn't tell your best friend. A warts-and-all account of where my mind is right now. It's a song about getting fucked up on a Friday night. In east London you can't go anywhere without someone having cocaine on them. Suddenly, when we came back from tour it was all around me. But it's not a moralising song about using cocaine. More an explanation of the appeal - and the comedown.' But A Weekend In The City is not just party mu-



capture that weekend feeling in stark, honest detail. Between Saturday night and Sunday morning, thinks Okereke, all life - and all emotional points - are here.

He addresses this directly on Sunday: the drums pound like a headache after "a heavy night, it was a heavy night", before the hang-over moves into a more blissful state: "I love you in the morning, when you're still strung out" Okereke sings over a euphoric, post-comedown melody.

The night - or two nights - before the morning after are detailed in On. It begins as a minimal techno thrum with a bassline that throbs at the back of the head. Then it all kicks off. "Silver slugs lined up like bullets, rolled up twenties they disappear, you make my tongue loose" - is

sic for party people. Where Is Home concerns racism and death, that of Christopher Alaneme, the black teenager stabbed in smalltown Kent. "After the funeral breaking cola nuts/We sit and reminisce about the past," begins one of Okereke's most impassioned vocals.

'It's to do with the idea of me, as a second generation black person, living in the UK, I don't really feel comfortable, I don't really feel the door of opportunity in this country is open to me. All these articles in the mainstream press - all these images you see of young black kids terrorising people - are reinforcing the idea of us as The Other.'

This polarising of post-9/11 and post 7/7 society is also discussed in Hunting For Witches, a



bold, anthemic song, that opens with the line: "I'm sitting on the roof of the house with a shotgun..." There are enemies amongst us, we are told, and we must all be vigilant(ies)...

In writing and recording the songs on *A Weekend In The City*, Bloc Party's eyes - and ears - have roamed far and wide. Waiting For The 7.18 is rebooted drum'n'bass with lovely chiming keyboards. 'We were going for a real Richard D James [Aphex Twin] sound,' says Okereke. It sounds nothing like Bloc Party. 'That was the idea.'

On is a giddy, blood-rushing celebration. Uniform is a slashing rock monster about homogenised global youth culture that will surely be a moshpit favourite. An unexpected influence was Kate Bush's *Sat In Your Lap* - Okereke loved the 'madness' evoked by the competing voices.

Kreuzberg is the sound of a Hoxton U2, bigger, even, than the first album's *Pioneers*, full of drama and, even as the lovelorn lyrics offer up tender images aplenty. 'Alluding to a stadium moment is not something to be ashamed of,' grinned Okereke. 'if It can be done well...'

And then there's *The Prayer*, the first single. You can hear Okereke's voice, multi-tracked to the high heavens. It was inspired by *St Luke's Passion* by Penderecki, which the frontman listened to religiously for much of this year. 'I was rethinking my voice as a separate instrument. I was stacking it and distorting it.'

Aiding this ambition was producer Jackknife Lee. He helped the band rethink what guitars - what rock - could do, and conjured up sonic wizardry at the flick of a Pro-Tools switch. Lee's thoughts were particularly important in the creation of *The Prayer*, a staggering, motoring song destined to start warping radio airwaves any minute now...

But the lyrics to *The Prayer*: for all the serious

themes and issues laid bare elsewhere on *A Weekend In The City*, is Bloc Party's comeback single really about Kele 'Mr Serious' Okereke saying that, actually, fame and success and 'Avin' It is a good laugh?

'Yeeeeeaaah...' he says slowly, smiling bashfully. It was clear that, for all his dark materials in the new songs, he was happier, more sure of himself, more up for it. 'Heh heh. It's weird,' he continues, 'all these lyrics, save this one, I agonised over for month and months and months. Whereas this one started off with a different feel, perspective. Garrett [Lee] really encouraged me to try and do something that wasn't quite so meticulous. One of the best lyrics in pop history is *Milk Shake* by Kelis - "my milk shake brings all the boys to the yard/I'd teach you but I'd have to charge". It's such a sinister image. It doesn't mean anything, or it means the whole world. Is she a prostitute? Is she working in a milk bar? It has such a dark undercurrent.'

'So with this song I was trying to cut my mind off from trying to rationalise everything. The first words just came to me. I wanted it to be something that would move people on to the dancefloor but in a real throwaway way. I think there's great validity in telling people that you don't have to try and over intellectualise everything. With *The Prayer*, I was trying not to think.'

'So,' says Kele Okereke in conclusion. 'That's what came through: this idea of success. There's something really bold there. Something really... not us! We're seen as a polite and serious band. But I wanted to do something that wasn't about that at all.'

Join Bloc Party for *A Weekend In The City*. You won't think of the place, or the band, in the same way again.

# the fall of troy

We spend our lives waiting for something to blow our minds. We survive the drone of everyday life thanks to promise of the extraordinary, the clung-to belief that within the framework of our mundane existences there will be a few things so striking and so monumental they will alter our entire mindset of what is possible. In music, specifically, we weed through the generic, the repetitive, the synthetic, in search of sonic experiences that smash into us like a ton of bricks, leaving us with nothing but awe when we finally catch our breath. That is what Mukilteo, WA band *The Fall of Troy's* staggering new record, *Manipulator*, does - shatters expectations and assures that even in this time where the drying music scene is filled with rehashed guitar riffs and stolen vocal melodies, originality is still possible.

Written in 2006 during what singer/guitarist Thomas Erak calls a "really dark time" in his life, *Manipulator*, the follow-up to 2005's *Doppelganger*, discards everything you think you know about *The Fall of Troy*. Eschewing the inevitable conventions of genre or scene, the record is constantly in motion, taking its listener to a brutal place where lying and cheating are the norm, and where despite its dark but staunchly realistic take on human nature there is a palpable sense of hope and catharsis. Erak's signature fast-picked guitar work flies around bassist Tim Ward's dynamic low-end and drum-

mer Andrew Forsman's heavily throbbing beats, driving the disc to explore newly discovered heights and depths in the band's sonic landscape with evident fervor.

"We wanted to expand upon our band in every direction musically and attitude-wise," Erak says of the group's goals for the album. "To push the envelope even further than what we've done before. We've figured out what we want to sound like and

it's a million different things. We wanted to go in different directions and see where we could take it. I think we went above and beyond that."

*The Fall of Troy* entered the studio with Matt Bayles (Botch, Mastodon, Isis) in December, where the producer helped to cull the trio's current struggles and discontents into 12 ear-bending tracks that blatantly ignore typical song structure, instead propelling themselves in exact opposite direction that one expects. The best parts of *Doppelganger* are there - the pounding drums, the insane guitar work, the juxtaposition between melodic mellifluousness and violent aggression - but *Manipulator* evolves the band's sound several levels ahead, achieving the near impossibility of making cacophony and chaos seem beautiful.

"We're a band that's always pushed our own boundaries and everybody expectations of us," Erak says. "You're always going to get

ish...sometimes songs don't quite make sense unless listened to in context. Things like blogs and song downloads are the way things are going, and record labels are accordingly trying to change how they sell music; record sales are going down as a result, and now they want all sorts of things that create revenue, like merchandise, and pieces of tour money, which is something that was unheard of before. While downloading will continue, hopefully the album never dies...you just have to think of creative ways to get people to buy them. I've always been interested in the actual artwork of the album, so we spent a lot of time with our artwork, wanting to make something we really liked and would want to buy ourselves.

RC: For the release of *Dystopia*, you did it through the band's label 'Siberia'. How did the decision to form your own label come about, and has it work out for you?

AJ: Having our own label afforded us a lot more freedom. It was never something we set out to do, but each time the possibility of signing has come up, we've thought it may be better if we did it ourselves, if we had a good grasp of where we wanted to take the band, and how we wanted to do things... that's why we stayed independent. On our last EP, the label was more or less a stamp, but with this album, it has been functioning a lot more like a label, so there's been a lot more work associated with all the press, and everything that comes with releasing an album - the extra work at times can be stressful, but is ultimately rewarding, because we do have the freedom to make the decisions and do what we want, and we're not having to answer to anybody, which is great. At a time like this - we were really busy, and spent a lot of time overseas, while there was a lot of stuff that needed to be done back here to promote the album, and we had to constantly approve or disapprove things - it was good to know we're doing it ourselves, and we own our music. Maybe one day, we can put other artists out on the label.

# - ROCK STAR ETIQUETTE -

-Lesson 10-

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# The Blood Brothers

An ecstatic 'Oh shit!' moment occurs midway through the catchy and caustic bounce of the Blood Brothers' "Street Wars / Exotic Fox-holes." The song settles lithely into an eerie calm, warm with sinuous upright bass, plaintive clarinet, and a hazy Hammond organ drone. It's both blissful and melancholy, and a pure alchemy of the band's individual creative powers. More importantly it is a bold inversion of a peerless and progressive aesthetic the Brothers have cultivated through years of dedication.

"Take someone like Charles Mingus," offers bassist Morgan Henderson. "People would hear him and call it Jazz, but in his mind he was creating modern black Classical music." Similarly, any vague notions of Punk may be too narrow and constricting to convey just what it is the Blood Brothers do so well. "I think we've always had the collective feeling that this is our music," says vocalist Jordan Blilie. "So we should be able to do whatever the fuck we want with it."

In the waning spring days of 2006, the Brothers converged on Seattle's Robert Lang Studios to record Young Machetes, the follow up to their 2004 V2 debut, Crimes. Once again the band teamed with Crimes producer, John Goodmanson (who also mixed and engineered the project) and, in addition, enlisted Guy Picciotto (famed Fugazi member and Rites of Spring founder) and together the two inspired

a renewed energy and confidence in the band. "John and Guy helped us believe in our first instincts," says Morgan, as evidenced on the rousing "Spit Shine Your Black Clouds." What begins as a sly shake across a quicksand dance floor, hungry for hearts of glass, deftly segues into a sour ballad-esque passage propelled by Johnny's baroque howl.

Lyrically, Young Machetes remains firmly rooted in the surreal consciousness, rage and oblique politics the Brothers have always embraced. It also reveals a new, once-bitten wisdom. "I thought the collective dissent of our generation would bring about positive change," says Jordan of the election year climate that inspired Crimes and its direct commentary. "When that didn't happen I felt like the bottom had fallen out." Still, Jordan and the band stay positive, motivated by the idea of the 'personal as political.' "It comes down to your dollars and cents - who and what you choose to support." It also means music is a microcosm for change. "Imagine where we could go with music," Morgan ponders, "if we always said 'yes' and not 'no.'"



Midnight Juggernauts



## LIGHTSPEED CHAMPION

Lightspeed Champion is the new alias of Devonte 'Dev' Hynes, formerly of defunct dance-thrashers Test-Icicles. Dev just recorded an album with Bright Eyes producer Mike Mogis which, he says, sounds like "losing your virginity for the fifth time." His record company touts him as a mad genius with an extraterrestrial look, but he's really a modest, down-to-earth dude who draws comics, geeks out about hip-hop, is allergic to everything, and might be the unlikeliest star of country music ever.

You're American but you're also a bit English. What's the story there?

I'm Houston born but Essex bred. I tend to spend a lot of time Stateside of late.

You've said that your new album is worthy of a Grammy. How would you describe it to those who haven't heard it?

It's like Gram Parsons dating Anne and Nancy Wilson whilst riding a solo over a nation's dreams.

You went all the way to Nebraska to record it. What are the main differences between east London and Omaha?

Well, I'd look out the window in Omaha and see blue skies and four feet of snow. I look out the window in Dalston and I see (depending on the time of day) prostitutes crying or Turkish men spitting.

I'm sure Omaha's nightlife doesn't compare to London's. What did you do in the evenings?\_ Wikipedia! I was looking at the hip-hop rivalries on Wikipedia and they had a lot of mistakes mainly to do with the 2Pac / Biggie

rivalry and the Eminem / Benzino beef. So I spent an hour or so writing my own paragraphs on those subjects, and then I noticed a few other mistakes, so corrected those too. I was bored and it was late. Actually, I don't think it was that late.

Let's talk about Mike Mogis. While you were working with him, could you figure out why he is so highly regarded?

Yeah, he's a genius but doesn't seem to know it. He'd be, like, shy or embarrassed to play me pedal steel parts and I'd be like, "Dawg, just lay that shit down and redo everything I've done." But he wouldn't, so you can still hear how bad at guitar I am on the record.



So I hear there's a comic coming out with the record. What's it about?

When I was younger I used to be able to concentrate before going to bed and enter the same dreamworld every night in my sleep. So the story and theme kind of stem from that. It's eventually (hopefully) going to be graphic novel. Artistically it's based on Tomine's work. He's my biggest drawing influence. It's also inspired by my friend Ferry from the semifinalists. His art blows my mind constantly.

On your blog you talk about suffering from ter-



## Midnight Juggernauts

It's been a long time coming, but Melbourne band Midnight Juggernauts have finally released their debut album, *Dystopia*, and it's been making waves amongst critics and listeners alike. Root Canal! spoke with Andy Juggernaut about the band's new album, the rise of iTunes, and their own record label, 'Siberia'.

**Root Canal!:** While more and more new albums - especially 'dance' albums - seem to be just a collection of singles, *Dystopia* is an album that is really 'an album', with a beginning, middle and end.

**Andy Juggernaut:** It was important to us...to make a proper album that you listen to; [an album's] like a journey. We spent a lot of time with the tracklisting, trying to have something that flows and goes through different types of styles, emotions, and it's something we placed a lot of emphasis on - making sure it wasn't just a collection of songs, and something you'd want to sit at home and listen to, rather than just out at a club.

**RC:** People who've seen you live in the past would associate your sound with music you dance to, yet you've included some tracks there that are a little more down-tempo. Had you been writing much music in that style over the years?

**AJ:** We'd never played that style live, and while we'd worked on little things in demos, it was stuff that was never going to happen until we started working on the album...The thing about an album is you get that opportunity to experiment more. While our last EP [*Shadows*] boosted us a lot, it was very dance-oriented. They

were very quick tracks, and we got a couple of singles out of it...but with the album, you do get the chance to try out different things, and with tracks like 'Dystopia' and 'Aurora', you don't have to worry about everything being a single, and you have the opportunity to experiment.

**RC:** The album's been a long time in the making for you. Was it difficult to choose what made the album, given you had years of ideas to work with?

**AJ:** We had a lot of tracks we wrote in the lead up, and there was some hard decisions as to what tracks we left off, but in the end, we went with the songs that went best together - it was important that the tracks worked together as an album. [Recording the album] was an organic process, and in some ways it ended up different to what we thought it was going to be beforehand, because when we got into the studio environment, and had the studio at our disposal, we came out with this. We're really happy with it, as it represents what we did at that time. Our next record is going to be very different, and we'll probably always be like that.

**RC:** Given the music industry is going through some dramatic changes, with power shifting from labels, and online retailers like iTunes becoming how people receive their music, releasing an album seems to have become a very different process. How did the band deal with all this?

**AJ:** iTunes have been great for us, as we've been playing the game of singles, and bonus tracks with [online purchased] singles, but I'd be really sad if the actual album died, because it's a very different experience when you have a full album - you can listen to it from start to fin-



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rible stomach cramps. Are you feeling better? Actually right now I'm not feeling too good. It's been constant ever since I was around 13. I had all the tests and everything. I pretty much missed my last year of school because of it. I've been on all the medications, but as of now in my life I have chosen not to be on anything. The last stuff I was on made me have horrible mood swings and I managed to convince myself I was growing man-boobs. I have a lot of allergies and many foods just don't really sit. I can't even have fizzy drinks let alone alcohol. There have been times I've indulged in alcohol, and it's not pretty, literally.

When did you feel proudest?

When Crossfire made skatedecks of my old band (Test-Icicles) that was so crazy. I used to dream of having like a custom board or a graphic on a deck!

What do you wish you didn't do, but do anyway?

Moan. I'm saying sorry right now to everyone I moan to.

What do you detest?\_

My iPod battery dying just before stepping on a night bus.

OK. Thanks Dev.

Cool. Bye!





# ART BRUT

A brutography

“That’s what we kept saying all the while we were recording the album,” says Eddie Argos, ‘it’s a bit complicated’. So it just made sense that that would be the title.

“Oh yes, with their Dan Swift produced second album, their first for new label Labels / Mute, Art Brut (Eddie Argos - vocals, Ian Catskilkin - lead guitar, Freddy Feedback - bass, MIkey B - drums and new guitarist Jasper Future) have grown up. But don’t worry, they’ve only grown up a little bit. “The first album was kind of me when I was 17, and I suppose this one is me when I’m 19. If we do another one, I expect it will be me when I was 21.”

As chief rapier wit and unlikely champion of Britpop’s new wave, the 27-year-old Eddie Argos is used to living life at the speed of pop. It was (a bit) complicated enough for the band who combined kitchen sink drama and French philosophy to even get here - “here” being encroaching international superstardom - from humble beginnings as champions of London’s DIY New Cross Scene, class of 2004. And you’ll know about Eddie Argos, former postman, lifelong dreamer, occasional indie prophet whose only real ambition in life was to one day

get on Top Of The Pops.

The TOTP dream may be over now the show has ended, but It’s A Bit Complicated takes Art Brut’s love affair with pop music to dizzying new levels. From opener Pump Up The Volume’s awkward fumbling, wondering aloud “is it so wrong, to break from your kiss to turn up a pop song?” to the deranged dancefloor melodrama of new single Direct Hit, or the rolling, melodious I Will Survive, the new album takes their ascent to pop supremacy to its next dizzying stage.

Art Brut’s debut single ‘Formed A Band’ became a rallying cry across indie London, a call to arms to a new generation determined to poke fun at everything and everyone.

Their star was rising. Next single, the stream-of-consciousness ode to unrequited love that is ‘Emily Kane’ narrowly missed a top 40 placing because an administrative error meant that none of their download sales carried forward. “But I kind of like that,” says Eddie, “because I didn’t get in with Emily Kane either in the end. So they’re both a bit disappointing.” Their debut album ‘Bang Bang Rock’n’Roll’ was eventually released on Fierce Panda and things were moving faster than Eddie could ever have anticipated

Their process of licensing ‘Bang Bang Rock’n’Roll’ one country at a time started to pay serious dividends in Germany. “I think they think I’m more intelligent than I actually am,” continues Eddie, “they were saying it was a concept album.” As things took off, they found themselves playing two nights with Oasis in Hamburg. “Liam Gallagher was at the side of the stage both nights, clapping and dancing,”

oyer (bass) entered the studio to record Le Compte Complet’s follow-up. Still on the Dare To Care imprint but now recorded at Breakglass and Beat Box studios in Montreal by Ryan Battistuzzi, Trompe-l’Oeil sees the band collaborating with the likes of Pierre Lapointe (singing on Montréal -40°C), Loco Locass (on La Russe), and members of Les Trois Accords and The Dears. Fans of the band’s performances of the last two years will recognize some of the included songs, but Trompe-l’Oeil is an additionally “improved” Malajube. The new album captures and energizes elaborate, carefully crafted, catchy, and melodic tracks such as Casse Cou, La Monogamie, and the stand-out single Montréal - 40°C. In spring 2006, Malajube recruited new member Renaud Bastien (guitar, keyboards), right before the French release of Le Compte Complet, on the Ladilafé label.

Trompe-l’Oeil has earned Malajube three nominations at the 2007 Juno Awards, a Félix award at l’ADISQ for Revelation of the year, two Félix awards at l’Autre Gala ADISQ, for Alternative album of the year and Album cover. In September 2006, the group was one of the ten finalists in nomination for the prestigious Polaris Music Prize. They also won the awards for Artist of the year and Best Alternative Rock album at the first edition of the GAMIQ (Gala de l’Alternative Musicale Indépendante du Québec), the Rising Star and Nova Awards at the last MIMI (Montreal Independant Music Initiative) Gala in Montreal as well as a nomination for the Prix Echo de la Chanson, presented by the SOCAN, for La Monogamie. Malajube has extensively toured the coun-

try and abroad playing festivals and events such as the CMJ Music Marathon, Osheaga and Les Eurokéesnes, turning on industry-heads and listeners alike. Regardless of the language barrier, “Trompe-l’Oeil” was released in the U.S. (October 31st, 2006) and has impressed the critics of Pitchfork, Brooklyn Vegan, Wired, Fader, Filter, Spin, Penthouse, Men’s Health Journal, Vanity Fair and more! In May 2007, the album was also released in UK, Europe, Australia and Japan! So check your listings for a Malajube show near you and prepare to be blown away !

# MALAJUBE

Malajube is a Canadian pop-rock quintet that in 2004 quietly impressed hungry listeners with their debut record *Le Compte Complet* and more recently has drawn a wide amount of praise for their second album *Trompe-l'Oeil*, springing out of the already artistically rich local music scene, with their unique and original sound.

*Le Compte Complet* was released in November '04 on the independent label Dare To Care Records and was recorded at Ground Zero studio by Martin Pelland from The Dears. This record originally propelled their sounds into Quebec's musical universe, many songs charting in all the region's college and university radio stations and on Musique Plus.

In 2005, Julien Mineau (vocals, guitars), Francis Mineau (drums), Thomas Augustin (keyboards, vocals) and Mathieu Courn-



remembers Eddie with awe. “And then during ‘Modern Art’ he was jumping around, saying ‘this is my favorite! Fucking love it!’” Later on in the dressing room Eddie gave Noel a copy of ‘Bang Bang Rock’n’Roll. “He’s like, ‘oh I’ve got it,’ and started singing a bit of ‘My Little Brother’. I told him it was like Half Man Half Biscuit supporting U2. He said he loved Half Man Half Biscuit and started singing ‘Trump-ton Riots’ at me. It was the most surreal moment of my life.

“But this was nothing compared to what was going on in America, with the band getting plaudits on influential US music site Pitchfork Media Rolling Stone named ‘Formed A Band’

their Single Of The Year. Spin named them one of the 15 Best Live Bands In The World. And they appeared on the coveted Jimmy Kimmel talk show. “I’m quite a

nervous man anyway,” confesses Eddie, “but that was terrifying because it’s real television isn’t it, American television. And you know Americans, they’re all enthusiastic. I realized then it was going quite well.”

But in any adventure, there will be those who don’t make it, and eventually the time came for guitarist Chris Chinchilla to depart. Having left their jobs for a not-exactly-lucrative album deal, the band found themselves without any money.



"I'm quite stupid," Eddie reflects, "I thought it was

romantic, starving to death in a bedsit somewhere. But Chris likes comfort more than me I think, so he left.

"But by the time replacement Jasper Future came in, with a brazen Weezer/Nirvana influence to beef up the band's sound, they were already a very different prospect. The gilded palace of show business was opening itself up; from the sublime (playing with Ghostface Killah and meeting Russell Simmons, Wyclef Jean and Gnarls Barkley) to the ridiculous (being covered by We Are Scientists), Art Brut were becoming America's favorite sons. "In America and Germany I think they're a lot less cynical than us. So when they hear 'Emily Kane' they say 'oh you must have loved Emily Kane, that's a lovely love song', whereas over here they'll go 'oh that's funny; is she made up? That's like an emo song'. But oh no, it was all true."

Actually, the song put Eddie back in touch with Emily, "and her new boyfriend's lovely," he says with a sorrowful face, but with that - and TOTP - behind him, he was ready to return to London and work on stage 2.

"I didn't realize how much I love England, being away from here for so long," says Eddie. The band had just completed their biggest ever US and UK tours, festivals across the globe including Coachella, Pitchfork, Benacassim and New York's Siren, had a hit single in all-new track 'Nag Nag Nag Nag' and, recently signed to Labels / Mute, they were quick to work on 'It's A Bit Complicated'. "It's good," muses Eddie, "because we never really got to write the first album. We just had to use all the songs we

had. This time we knew what we were doing."

And in every sense, it's a better album - a bit complicated, but not so much that it muddies the cast-iron pop principles the band were founded on. "The album is more if the same, but better. We've got a sense of humor, but we're not a joke."



els. Are people going to read that and go, 'But it didn't really happen. There were no tiny people'?" None of the things she writes about have happened to her, she says, "or I'd be a really f\*\*\*ed-up person, frankly". She addresses this question of fiction and fact with great humor.

Heart-on-sleeve displays don't seem to be Moss's thing, as mutual acquaintances attest. The surface is mostly a benign, unruffled one. The real work - mining her dark materials, filing away her laser-eyed observations for later use - occurs behind this placid facade. The daughter of a Chinese mother and English father, she grew up in Hong Kong, before moving to Sussex, aged 12.

"We lived in East Grinstead - we went there for the Steiner education, not the Scientology [the following's British HQ is situated outside the town]. It's the weirdoes v the weirdoes, with a Waitrose in between." Of her education, she says: "I didn't get any life lessons from Steiner, but then I didn't get any maths lessons, either." But there is something about Moss - her air of free-spirited naivety, her careless and admirably noncareerist approach to her music - that recalls a caveat often entered about progressive



education: that it fosters in pupils a belief that self-expression is everything, almost a currency, and that it will pay for the invoices and final demands the real world has a habit of shoving through your letter box.

That is not to say Moss is away with the pixies.



Far from it: you sense a core of steel to her, and she has been as efficient at burning bridges as she has at building them in the music industry. When, early on, she was bundled in with Britain's growing antifolk scene, Moss cadged a lift simply because she found like-minded souls - acts such as Jeremy Warmesley, Noah and the Whale and Jamie T - on board. The movement originated in New York, when local unsigned bands, refused a hearing at established folk clubs because their musicianship was judged inadequate or because they were daring to sully the purity of folk with elements such as punk, set up on their own.

Moss has since expressed reservations about what she describes as the "elitism" of the UK scene, but her rudimentary guitar-playing and bird-yet-to-fly singing certainly fit the original bill, which she describes as "letting anyone play who can't get a gig anywhere else". To illustrate, she cites a male singer she saw recently in New York. "He was dressed as a woman, and he was literally playing one chord and screaming about his tits. It was great."

Having successfully batted away the advice of a past manager to "put a few more choruses in", Moss is currently busy working on her debut album, honing her lo-fi, Michelle Shocked-style songs, whose aim and appeal she sums up as: "Not right in your face, so you have to look for it." Barring a sudden rush of dinner invitations, the record will be out on her own label in the new year. In the meantime, Emma Lee Moss will be taking herself out for lunch.

Gabriel is released on December 3 on Close Harbor; Emmy the Great's tour continues today at King Tut's, Glasgow.

## The legendary Emmy the Great



Emmy the Great is yet to land a record deal, but she has a lyrical talent to dine out on  
Dan Cairns

Emma Lee Moss is sitting in a cafe in Camden Town, being bought breakfast, by me. This is not, says the hotly tipped singer-songwriter, something she's jaded about. The fabled record-company wine-and-dine technique deployed to secure a musician's signature has yet, it seems, to be used on her. "I always thought it was a myth," says the 23-year-old, "until I found out all my friends have experienced it, and then I thought, 'Oh.' I did have a manager once who used to take me out for pub lunches, but only so he could talk about his weekend. I've never been wooed." For now, she is releasing records on her own label, Close Harbour. "Maybe I'll take myself out," she laughs. "I'll send myself a demo and then take me out to lunch."

Not that Moss, who operates under the name Emmy the Great, has needed either haute cuisine or a fat advance to progress to where she is now. Word of mouth has built her an audience that, for the most part, hangs on her every lyric and melody. Relentless gigging and a clutch of limited-edition singles and EPs have garnered blogosphere hysteria. In the permanent quick-fire round we all now live in, an artist can, of course, be finished before he or she has even started - and Moss has already attracted her fair share of criticism. A lot of it, she says, is characterized by "the spitefulness of being any-

mous" that colors so much cyber-discourse, where people itching with inadequacy and puffed up with grievances pour forth their poison. On one music website, she laughs: "There's this girl who always, always says horrible things about me. You can go onto their user name and see their photo. I see her around sometimes, and I kind of think, maybe I could ask someone to attack her."

Better, surely, to sharpen a lyricist's pen that has already been wielded to wound. On her song *The Hypnotist's Son*, Moss muses: "I thought romance was pretty / Then you went and spoiled it / Every time that I think of you / I have to go to the toilet." More darkly, she sings, on *Edward Is Dedward*, of a woman attending her lover's funeral and then having sex with his father, "Between your sheets all charred with grief / The pillows tainted with your dreams".

You learn to your cost in this job the perils of suggesting to songwriters either that their material may be entirely autobiographical, or so fictitious it lacks felt emotion or authenticity. Regina Spektor once turned on me when I broached this subject - "It's all rooted," she spat, "in real emotions" - and Moss is no less vexed.

"That's ridiculous," she says. "If you look at someone's entire songwriting output, if all those things happened to them, they'd be dead. If you write about only things that 'happen' to you, you'll write, 'I went to the post office today and delivered my package / And then I went home and watched television.'" (Which kind of sums up some of the mockney-fied street poetry being peddled at the moment, but I let the thought go.) "You can't expect someone to write entirely about their own experiences; you can only expect them to use their own emotions."

Her new single, *Gabriel*, a song she says is about a 19th-century woman marrying for money not love, is a good example. In any case, she argues, art of all forms would simply die if creative people felt inhibited about drawing on something because they hadn't gone through it. "Look at Gulli-ver's Trav-

## Silversun Pickups Kaiser Chiefs Jakobínarína The Rakes Live

I am a vulgar man, of base tastes. But I wanted to avoid other Americans at the Irish pubs in their Halloween costumes. Indeed, without a really good idea (like when I was Shaun), I don't want to do Halloween back in the states, either (and I still don't know why me up on my idea to dress up like the Battle Royale kids and attack some party with pot lids and binoculars and axes. I won't even insist on being the Robert Smith kid!) So, when I saw that the Kaiser Chiefs were doing an early show at Gasometer, and the Rakes doing a midnight show at Flex, I bought tickets for both and hoped for the best. Now, the Chiefs were playing with two other bands, and the Rakes were going it alone, so I was a little worried that, along with crossing the city, I would miss some of the Rakes. Fortunately, the Viennese indie rock gods had thought of all that. The doors for the Chiefs opened at 7 sharp, first band on by 745.

Jakobínarína or something. They insisted that we go to their website to find out more. They're a six piece, and I was amazed that six guys, from Iceland (they played Velvet Lounge a few weeks back, fyi-ed), with that much fringe, couldn't come up with better songs. Each song

sounded eerily similar to the last, with the performance differentiated only by when the singer and a few band members marched merrily, to the bemusement of all, into the crowd. There's potential there, but first, they need to get different haircuts. And listen to the Shout Out Louds.

They were off by 830, and the DJ at Gasometer - I've said it before, kept me quite entertained. Are Friends Electric? was among the arrows in his quiver, though he did play Put Your Hands Up for Detroit, which we know that shalt not. Anyway, 10 minutes later, the army of roadies had tossed Jakobínarína aside and it was time for the second act, Silversun Pickups. They were truly wonderful to watch, with a prog-refuge keyboardist, a hot female bassist and a drummer that was a complete revelation of movement and energy. The guitarist was also pretty shit-hot with one problem - he also sang. And he shouldn't. Music like this needs a much stronger voice - preferably deeper and more resonant, to stand up to the extraordinary music. Instead, the\_high, reedy, emo tones sound like shit side-by-side. If you have to scream because you can't sing, do neither. Ah well. They were off by 908.



Then, on came the Chiefs. Now, I've been a fan of them for quite some time. About as long as three releases of "I Predict a Riot" and two of "Oh My God." I was lucky enough to be there when they played to 50 or so bemused Angolophiles at the Tribeca Grand, and a larger crowd a little while later in Brooklyn (thanks F&K!). And haven't seen them since. So, to see them again, now that they're globe-trotting, chart-

topping superstars in more countries than I can count, it's quite a thing. And they delivered. The band took the stage wearing Halloween costumes, and Ricky, as ever, kept up the energy through the whole set. The jobs announced their attendance, launching full beer glasses at the stage from pretty far back (at the cost of a Euro for the refund, in addition to the beer, and getting thrown out before the first song - pretty expensive yobbery), and a fan waved a Leeds United scarf much to Ricky's amusement. But onto the music. Every Day I Love You Less and Less, Born to Be a Dancer, Ruby, Modern Way, We Are the Angry Mob, and I'm sure Oh My God and I Predict a Riot, though I see neither in my notes. An excellent show, with a sold-out, boistrous audience and lots of synchronized hand-waving, and hugs all around. They were done by 11, and off to Flex! For the Rakes!

I described Gasometer before - it's a physically stunning space with only one beer, but great kasekrainers to fill hungry bellies. Flex, built into a quayside on the Donau, has the best sound in Vienna, much better beer, that horrible red wine and coca cola thing the kids love, and the ambience of a meat locker. The stage is very narrow, and opposite the stage are the stairs to the coat check, meaning that large crowds, like tonight, are pushed back along or up the stairs. Still, by this point, several pints in, and relaxed and happy over making it in time, I didn't care. I was having a wonderful conversation with a fellow "journalist," and not bothered at all that the chances of successfully dancing up front were about as high as the chances of me braving another 10 minutes outside in the howling wind and freezing cold of a premature Middle-Europe winter. What can I say? I didn't take notes, but heard all the songs I wanted - from Watford to We Danced Together to 22 Grand Job to Work

Work Work- the only song I could've done with that they didn't do was "i-Problem." They were personable and the sound was so perfect, there were times when I wanted to check to see if they were really playing, and not going off a CD. They were, in a word, excellent. If you have a chance, see them live.



# U K TH OSS



# Interview:

## Vampire Weekend

It is somewhat apt that Vampire Weekend have just got their daily nutrition dose at a Turkish restaurant in Hamburg. Defying the conventions of their Columbia University education, they nosh down on some tasty kebabs, as opposed to munching preppy salads.

Instead of ploughing ahead with straight-up Ivy School indie-rock, the Brooklyn-based outfit manage to mash up a plethora of world music styles, dipping into Afrobeat and reggaeton, as well as displaying a penchant for post-punk and alt-pop. Not exactly the Goth band that their name might suggest.

With their days of study behind them, Vampire Weekend's eponymous debut album has just dropped on the the ultra-hip XL Label (home to Adele, MIA and The White Stripes) following a mini-scramble for their signatures when the circulation of their 'Blue CD-R' demo made them a blogosphere wet dream.

And what a debut it is, mixing and matching musical styles with joyous abandon: the only thing these songs have in common is that they're superbly crafted. From pure pop nuggets as catchy as the common cold to more abstract aural adventures, Vampire Weekend is set to cause quite a stir.

What's perhaps surprising for an album so gorgeously layered is that there wasn't a whole lot of tampering of their initial CD-R release, as drummer Chris Tomson explains: "There was a pink CD-R as well, and if we continued, there would have been a yellow one. The only difference is that we recorded two more songs and dropped one."

Produced by keyboardist Rostam Batmanglij (frontman Ezra Koeing and bassist Chris Baio make up the ranks), Vampire Weekend wasn't birthed in any fancy studio environments, but had its genesis in bit-parts, recorded in various apartments.

"In a lot of ways, it forced you to work harder," Tomson muses. "If you are recording drums in your friend's basement and he is trying to get to sleep, you sort of need to get it finished there and then."

The end result sounds anything but rushed, however. From the clattering rhythmic clash of 'A-Punk', where Koeing momentarily sounds like a young Sting, to Batmanglij's piquant string arrangements on 'M79', Vampire Weekend seem to be fully in control.

XL obviously thought so as well. "They liked the way it sounded, but said we could go to a studio if we wanted to, but that wasn't like a big pitch or anything from them; they were happy as it was," agrees Tomson.

The English label's vote of confidence, coupled with their fine release reputation, made them an ideal home for Vampire

ing a different point on the path that we're stumbling along. Our music is rooted in our love for the punk rock/hardcore scene that helped to raise us, but our influences range from ambient and electronic to indie and hip-hop. Our new full-length (As The Roots Undo) is our most experimental release to date, as the risk of trying new things ended up being the most rewarding aspect of the writing process."

With hefty touring planned for the immediate future and another album on the eventual horizon, Circle Takes The Square continue to expand on the tracks they've already forged. A wide variety of fans have turned their ears to the band... kids that like everything abrasive/chaotic from Blood Brothers and Daughters to the more indie-minded sounds of Bright Eyes and Cursive... all having found CTTS to be a captivating experience. With the evolution of the band anything but clear yet undoubtedly incredible, the excitement surrounding this young group is truly a fascinating thing to behold.

# CIRCLE TAKES THE SQUARE

Circle Takes The Square was birthed from Savannah, Georgia in early 2000. Consisting of Drew Speziale (guitar/vocals), Kathy Coppola (bass/vocals), Jay Wynne (drums), and Collin Kelly (second guitar), the band quickly cut a demo CD for tour and soon after recorded for a split 7" with the mighty Pg.99. Following the release of the 7", Collin left the band and they remained a three piece until late 2004 with the addition of Bobby Scandifio.

In the early summer of 2003, as a trio the band recorded their debut full-length for Robotic Empire, entitled *As The Roots Undo*, which has not only received widespread critical acclaim, but according to *Alternative Press*, has "turned hardcore's rules for genre, song structure and pretty much everything else on their heads." Following the album's tracking the band hit the road for the better chunk of the year, resulting in an odometer that's seen three large-scale US tours, a UK jaunt and countless weeklong excursions over the years, all while a full-time college schedule.

Graduating from lows the band to passion for play-which CTTS sub-to the challenge with unfamiliar the vocabulary provide. Each ploration of emonences from a new translated into this ing language of achieved through terest of no genre healthy respect quote the band

"The changes ended on in-and as a band years is appar-Each



college now al-fulfill their intense ing live, during mits themselves of communicating faces using only that music can show allows ex-tions and experi-perspective, as unique and amaz-sound. This is all their primary in-limitations with a to innovation. To directly:

we've experi-dividual levels over the last four ent in our writing.



Weekend: "Before we even recorded anything, we sat down and agreed on labels that we would like mentioned early."

While XL's ears may have been pricked by hype-generation via blogs like Stereogum, Tomson is keen to distance himself from falling into the trap of becoming another blog-band, stressing that old-fashioned word-of-mouth has been pivotal to their rise.

"I think blogs are just one element of it; things like Myspace have helped us as well," he notes. "People will come to shows and tell friends about it and so on. I didn't really know what they [blogs] were until people started writing about us. To be honest, there is this really weird social dynamic about them, where people feel they have to be the first ones to discover a band and it is a bit strange for me."

Of course, the primary focus of much of this blogging has been on the band's palpable interest in world music, particularly African. "I think we all got into it in different ways when we were in College," he recalls. "I worked in a radio station, and there was this guy who had a really great African show, and I used to check out what records he was playing."

Meanwhile, the fact that they namecheck other musical luminaries in their songs, with Peter Gabriel cropping up on 'Cape Cod Kwassa Kwassa' and Lil' John appearing in 'Oxford Comma': surely the first time a band has referenced both the former Genesisman, and the Atlanta crunk maestro.

"I think that it can be very helpful describing something by using someone's name, as opposed to an emotion," Tomson laughs. "Hopefully it will bring up different things for different people."

Tomson hopes for Irish dates later in the year, not least because he spent five months here in 2003. While he has Irish heritage, there was another reason for Chris picking Ireland over other European countries as the location for his lengthy sojourn: "I didn't know any foreign languages well enough to go anywhere else!"

By Ciarán Ryan

to the table. And some of those tracks are definitely more danceable than Stiffed's live rock sound, though I would definitely not call Santogold a dance project. This record is still very rock and dub influenced, though we bend and twist those elements all over the place.

RC: You've worked with some amazing producers-Mark Ronson, Switch, Sinden, the late Disco D, Naeem Juman, XXXchange from Spank Rock. You've co-produced with Res, Gza, written lyrics for Lilly Allen. Who would you like to do a future collaborative project with?

SG: Devo!

RC: Do your lyrics come from personal experiences or do you keep that separate?

SG: I'm sure they do, even if not always directly.

RC: You seem to have a good sense of sound, twisting it enough to make it interesting and new. What are the most important elements you strive to show through your music?

SG: I'm really interested in rhythm and melody. My delivery is always rhythmic and based largely around the bassline. I also love old grimy analog sounds, which is why I derive much of my style from punk influences. And as far as melody and vocal sound, I like playing with my voice and challenging myself to find new vocal sounds and styles. I also love awkward harmonies.

RC: What are a few things that matter most to you?

SG: Thoughtful lyrics and good sounds

RC: You have dabbled in many things pertaining to music-from writing lyrics, producing, singing. Which do you like best? If you haven't already attempted, do you foresee Dj'ing as so many often seem to end up doing?

SG: I'm not really interested in DJing, though that was what I first thought would be my relationship to music, before I ever imagined I would be an artist. The first piece of music equipment I bought was a turntable, but I'm way more interested in making music than playing music for people. Especially because I don't go out much anyway. I like writing for myself and performing best.

RC: When you have some free time to travel, where do you love to relax?

SG: I love Hawaii, and my bed when my room's clean.

RC: It's 2am on a Saturday evening, in a city that never sleeps-where are you hangin out?

SG: Probably sitting in my bed working on my computer. I pretty much work until I pass out.

RC: What does the future have in store for Santogold?

SG: God only knows!



# Santogold



Every once in a while, an artist comes along and literally steals your soul. Unless you've been captured and brainwashed by a religious cult in the past year, chances are you've heard the name Santi White, or SANTOGOLD mentioned well over a few times. Not surprising. Her name has been splashed throughout internet land with coverage on a slew of blogs and spots in Fader and I-D magazine. I'm not the first to feature her, nor will I be the last and instinct tells me that she's about to go off the richter scale!!

This Philly bred, now New York based singer/songwriter is something of a rarity amidst all the music of today. It isn't everyday that an artist crosses genres and tackles them as swimmingly as Santi White has. From her previous punk band, Stiffed, (now defunct - absolutely loved them) to her recent project Santogold, Santi has worked with a list of noted talent that includes Mark Ronson, Switch, Sinden, the late Disco D, Freq Nasty, Naeem Juman, XXXchange from Spank Rock. She has co-produced with Res, Gza, written lyrics for Lilly Allen and worked with her boyfriend Trouble Andrew. Gasp!! This gal has taken the lead. Reminiscing my past love for hardcore punk, and Bad Brains is what prompted me to post this video by Santi's old band, 'Stiffed.' A glimpse of her past work and performance style which has a flair similar to that of H.R. from Bad Brains. Interesting to see how Santi has been able to reinvent herself so successfully.

If you're fiending for more of Santi's inimitable style and down to earth nature, read on for an interview and keep your eyes peeled for her self-titled album Santogold, slated for a late spring release on Lizard King Records and a tour with MIA and Amanda Blank!! (these hot ladies are sure to make you melt, like cheese)

Root Canale: Upon doing a google search for 'Santogold,' the first entry I came across is an odd site about a man named Santo Rigatuso, who in the mid-80's, tried to sell fake gold chains & promote his alien movie, Blood Circus. (ha!) Does the name Santogold have anything to do with that?

Santogold: Santogold was a nickname that I got when I was younger cuz I used to wear these huge gold name earrings. My friend who made it up said she got it off an infomercial for cheap gold, and that was it.

RC: What lead you to make the switch between your last ska-punk band, Stiffed, to Santogold, more dance related music?

SG: Well, Stiffed broke up, and John Hill (the bass player from Stiffed) and I just started writing a bunch of new material that was more dub influenced than the Stiffed songs had been, and using a lot more program drum and synth sounds. And since it wasn't a band project, we had an opportunity to work with a bunch of different producers who all brought new elements

## The Helio Sequence

Back in the days before the White Stripes, in those long-forgotten days of yore known as the early 90s, a two-piece band was a foreign and terrifying concept to mainstream music. Just as there was a time when people believed the sun revolved around the earth or that the rhythm method was an effective form of birth control, in the mid-90s, people clung to the notion that a band must have at least three people: a bass player, a guitarist, and a drummer. Maybe you could substitute keyboards for the bass or guitar parts, but even that was pushing it. Anything less might result in cries of "Get thee back, Satan!" from the audience, followed by a painful exorcism. Without that third person, people assumed the sound just couldn't be full enough to truly rock. It was in these dark times that the Helio Sequence came into existence, when a young Brandon Summers and Benjamin Weikel met and began making beautiful progressive rock together.

The band's full, multi-layered sound directly challenges the contention that two musicians does not make a full band. Airy, smooth vocals permeate each song, while shimmering keyboards wash over the music like a waterfall. The unobtrusive guitar sounds combine with the steady, hypnotic beat to ground the music and keep the listener from being blown away. It's got substance, but it's not heavy. The result is something cool, refreshing, and fun like a Slip 'n' Slide, but less frivolous. Their latest album, Love and Distance, is available on SubPop. The two began playing this difficult-to-describe sound nearly ten years ago. They both lived in Beaverton, and met when Summers was 13 and Weikel was 17. "I was friends with [Weikel's] little brother, who's my age," Summers explains

over pub grub at the Barley Mill on Hawthorne. "We had a band. Well, I don't know if you'd call it a band, but we would play together." Weikel joined the two younger boys to play as a band in 1996, but after about a year, Weikel's brother left the group. At the time, the two chose to have a two-piece band simply because they worked so well together; it wasn't that they were trying to be innovative. However, they were both very much aware that they were doing something unorthodox.

"The first few years, it was really strange," Weikel remembers. "People either loved it or they'd just be like, 'Get a bass player!'"

It was because of this that the two had a difficult time getting many shows. People were hesitant to book a two-person act, and the two had to struggle to schedule gigs. Eventually, they earned the support of a very important individual in the Portland music scene.

"It was [music promoter] Mike Thrasher that really gave us a chance," Weikel says. "We did North by Northwest and we started getting all these write-ups, which was really weird, because we couldn't get a show anywhere. There was this little club, Seventeen Nautical Miles-it used to be out on Woodstock-that we were trying to play at. We got maybe one or two at Mt. Tabor Pub. So it was very difficult and it was Mike Thrasher who embraced us and got us a bunch of shows."

In spite of the initial cool reception to their music, Summers and Weikel have managed to keep their focus over the years. Rather than relying on reviewers and critics to tell them what direction their music should take, the two have kept their eyes on what's most important:

“Probably up until just a couple years ago, we’ve been kind of blind, just doing our thing, not really thinking about it,” Weikel muses. He explains that it’s important to remain idealistic as musicians. As difficult as the rigorous working musician’s schedule is, it’s important to remember why they keep at it day after day.

“Rigorous” is almost an understatement. Even

when they’re not touring, there are weekend shows, practices, and recording sessions. It’s a continuous job and sometimes it’s exhausting. Summers even lost his voice recently from doing too many shows in a row. Still, they have to keep on keeping on, not only because they’re doing what they love, but also because artists need to eat, too. Since the two have turned their music into a full-time occupation, they haven’t worked at traditional jobs in three years or more.

“We tried getting jobs at one point, but no one would hire us,” Benjamin explains.

“It was kind of that weird point in the job market here where things were so bad that coffee jobs had like 250 applicants,” Brandon adds.



# ROCK STAR ETIQUETTE

-Lesson 11-

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