

Jagwar Ma - Biography 2013

Jagwar Ma came together in Sydney Australia when Jono Ma and Gabriel Winterfield bonded over a mutual passion of melody and experimental beats, and the pair set out creating a sound that would capture their love for contemporary electronica & classic American pop harmony, Joe Meek & King Tubby, vintage drum machines & radio frequency manipulation, improvised percussion and other esoteric methods of creating sound.

Meeting up to help finish off each other's songs, sometimes they would become cavernous rhythms and more than often the pair would record just for the hell of it. (On one occasion the two were purported to have stayed up recording the sound of hair swishing across a microphone).

Fusing the elements of disparate musics, the vocal sweetness of Laurel Canyon, Carl Wilson and Bruce Johnston and the modern electronic space of the past 40 years, in their first recording 'Come Save Me' they created a contemporary psychedelia, with the beauty and simplicity of classic sun-soaked beach pop.

Just weeks after putting it online, it had heavy airplay on Australian radio and a seven inch release on new label The Blue Rider, receiving a positive reaction to the mix of old & new, the uninhibited rhythm and a song rooted in celebrating sadness, its heavenly harmonies jilted by a lyric informing how leaving a loved one can really expose how lonely love really is.

"You can't trick people in to liking a song" says Gab "We knew we liked it and that we had a really good time making it".

Understanding that what they had was important and needed to be documented, they decamped to a friend's studio in France in the summer of 2012 to record their debut album - just the two of them in an empty farm two hours south of Paris, with an 808, a Fender jaguar, a laptop & a pair of vintage Neve console channels.

Their time at La Briche echoes like a strange psychedelic film: cycling in fields of sunflowers, copious amounts of cheese, growing caveman beards and going crazy in the studio. While working they listened to twisted electronica from Liars, Aphex Twin and Autechre. "And when we sat down to dinner we'd listen to Sinatra and Nat King Cole" says Gab.

Meanwhile next door lived a convoy of tradesmen with a thing for hardcore dub... "They were from a scene which is based around homemade soundsystems" says Jono "they take them out in to the middle of nowhere and play literally the hardest most sinister kind of music I've ever experienced. It is the weirdest thing in the world".

The long ways from home helped them to bond and cement their sound and at the same time absorb some of Europe's cultural and artistic influences from the fierce beats of Berlin's Berghain to London's most interesting corners. A mission to re-

create a two man wall of sound ensued and with help from friends, locals and a pre-historic desk once used by Conny Plank, the pair set about re-inventing the warmth, harmony and audio sunshine they'd hatched back in Australia.

Their collaborators along the way included long-time friend & Warpaint drummer, Stella Mozgawa and renowned producer/mixer, Ewan Pearson, a friend from Berlin, and they love that the songs have travelled ("they followed us around the world" says Jono) and their balance between old and new, the discovery of something vintage alongside future-looking experiments. "Finding great music from the past is a way of being adventurous" says Jono "It's that sense of finding something that you feel belongs to just you"

By the dying days of 2012 their time in France had not been ill-spent and a debut album Howlin was recorded and ready to be mixed.

Their first release from these sessions, The Throw, saw them occupying a space where Screemadelica and its wayward children used to live. A joyful seven minutes weaving melodies & beats with the sole purpose of making people move, of throwing caution to the wind & reaching a higher level with a greater purpose, or maybe without one at all, it touched a nerve & helped soundtrack the last few months.

Next single, 'The Man I Need' is more introspective, beats minimal and Gab crying "all you say to me, is all you want to see, you're not the man I need, that's what you said to me". Its ten-minute version climaxes with a voodoo drum-breakdown and the instruction "exercise your chemistry", and was picked up & played in full by Zane Lowe on BBC R1.

Across the album, Howlin's songs are full of classic hooks but often end in dirty clanking breakdowns. Pop songwriting is buried in layers of crunching synths and pedal effects. "How can you look gloomy? When you look so good to me" wonders Gab in 'Uncertainty', repeating "be my light" over Jono's techno-inspired beat.

Having played a couple of festivals last summer, adding Jack Freeman on bass, they kicked 2013 off back in Australia on the Big Day Out before playing a packed breathless NME show in London, Gab ending up topless, the audience lost in sound & strobes.

Since then they've toured Europe with Foals, and Australia with the xx and will be back in Europe to play more headline dates and festivals across the summer.

The explosion of colour and sound will echo throughout the year, Jagwar Ma is written on the wind, painted on the stars (as someone else once wrote...)

"...as the next generation sifts through the cultural debris of the last sixty years, great things are there for them to take. Whilst the space and light of contemporary life are evident and there as a starting point, there are precious elements in the ashes and the rubble. The sunshine of a long forgotten beach, when the last echo of the ebbing tide is taking the sailors and surf-boys into uncharted water, inhabited by clowns, non-ferocious monsters and the extreme squeal of the elements. Capture that moment. Forever. Recalibrate it for the ears

of your peers. Prolong the celebration of bright, shiny, outward thinking, always searching colourful sound. Long after the sand has dried there's nothing but the triumphal reverb of the music of the spheres..."