

# new canadian modern

cdn culture shock

## bringing home the seal hearts

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“People don’t know how to use the internet.” Pat Flegel of [Women](#) is unapologetic that it can be next to impossible to Google the band’s name without turning up pages of unrelated stuff. He does have a valid point. But when you consider that Women played some shows in Europe recently with the equally impossible to Google band, Basketball, you really do have to wonder if someone is just trying to mess with people’s minds.

It’s the sort of sly nod that is not entirely unexpected from a band that seems genuinely indifferent to the hype that’s been swirling around them for the past year or so. “‘Buzz’ and how we’re received are and always have been the last things on our minds,” Pat asserts, when asked about their reception at this year’s Sled Island festival. Since the release of their debut album last year, Women have been constantly fielding exuberant reviews, with music journalists everywhere falling all over themselves looking for increasingly imaginative descriptors for their sound. And with a recent Polaris long-list nomination coming on the heels of a blistering European tour, you would expect Women’s return to Calgary to play their second Sled Island festival to be a triumphant victory march.



Yet, Pat seems surprisingly reticent about the notion of Women returning home as the conquering heroes. “In the past we haven’t played Calgary very often because we are paranoid,” he maintains. “I think we’re just paranoid of playing the same songs for a really long time in town,” he clarifies. “We don’t want to get boring ... and a lot of the time we don’t think we play very well.” Yet, despite the almost daily shows on their newly completed European tour, it was an atmosphere in which they thrived. “The excessive hospitality lifts spirits and the shorter drive times allow for us to spend a few hours actually seeing some of the city we’re in,” he explains, which is of course a luxury that bands rarely have while touring the ridiculously huge North American land mass. “Our objective is to get as far away from home and what’s familiar to us as possible, and this is what makes touring Europe enjoyable. Not necessarily better,” he clarifies, “just different in that it’s superior to touring North America in every way.”

Besides the more humane durations spent crammed inside the van, the propensity of small clubs in Europe also makes for better tours. “Clubs are nice because there is no separation between the band and the crowd,” Pat states. “When I’m watching shows I prefer to see them in a club and I prefer to play close to people as well.”

Since their return to Calgary, Women have scaled back their concerts drastically from the almost daily dates on the European tour, concentrating primarily on a couple of festivals, like Sled Island and like Pitchfork in Chicago. For the members of Women, festivals have their own brand of charm, but more so when they can revel in the bedlam of being just another body in the sweaty crowd. “Festivals are

fun outside the actual set you're playing because there's a bizarre congregation of friends from all over the world that you never thought you'd see in one place at the same time," Pat declares. "Beer sponsorships are typically in place and this accommodates general mayhem."

Now that the mayhem of the current festival season has subsided, Women plan to focus their energies inwardly and concentrate on recording their next album. Split between a rented house in the southwest and Chad VanGaalén's new place in Montgomery, the recording was scheduled to begin in August. With Chad stepping in to help with the engineering when he is available and the rest being handled by the band itself, Pat foresees the new recording drawing heavy inspiration from the Swell Map's album 'Jane From Occupied Europe' and This Heat's self-titled record.

How exactly the influence of these early post-punk British experimental bands will manifest itself on the finished album is anybody's guess. Judging from the impossible to categorize sound of their debut album, it's clear that no matter what happens to be informing the consciousness of Women while they are recording, once that influence is tackled and mangled up by their collective minds and instruments, it's a sure bet that whatever ends up getting pressed onto the vinyl, it will be something entirely unique. When asked to comment on the description given by a friend of mine on their debut album being "a glacial version of the Beach Boys with themes of grey, ice and seal hearts replacing sun, surf, and bikinis," Pat explains "when we were recording I drew more inspiration from things like Glenn Branca, Skeeter Davis and 'The Idiot' but what actually ended up happening on the recording is something entirely different ... probably why some people think it sounds like the Beach Boys being mutilated and other people think it sounds like Nico's retarded nephews."

"As far as the winter thing goes," Pat declares, "I think it's definitely accurate!" Since the debut album was recorded during the insanely cold period between November and February, it will be intriguing to hear what transpires with a summer taping. I have a feeling that regardless of how much time the men from Women spend hanging with their label mates at Flemish Eye between recording sessions, occasions where they have been known to "abuse substances, eat barbecue, set things on fire, and throw a plastic disc to each other," when they ultimately emerge from the basement clutching a new recording, the world is going to hear something we have never quite wrapped our ears and minds around before. And that's cause for celebration.

\*\*\*written by **Barbara Bruederlin**, freelance music and culture writer hailing from the wild wild west of Calgary, Alberta. Read more articles and her ever-witty daily blog at [Bad Tempered Zombie](#).

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