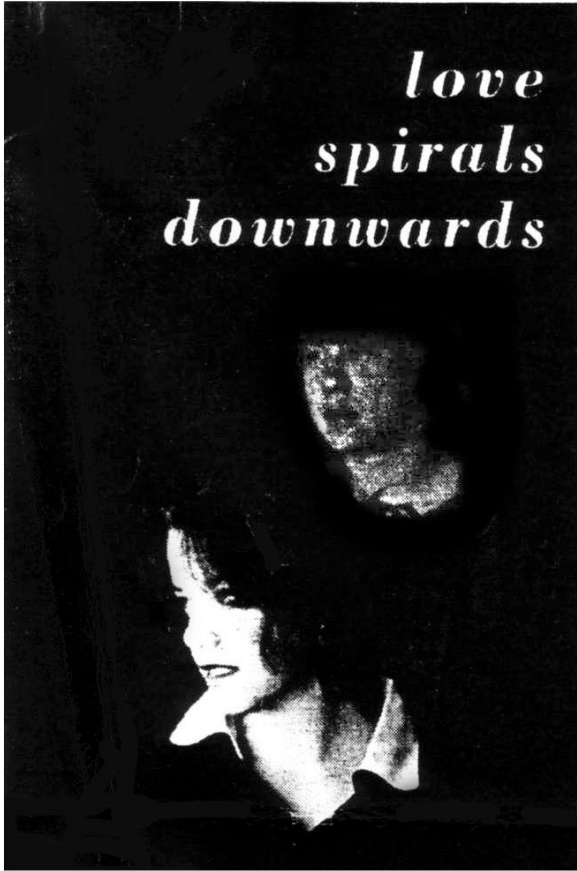


love spirals downwards



by Andrew Chadwick

Love Spirals Downwards create haunting tapestries of beautifully layered ethereal guitars and stirring, golden female vocals which seem sometimes like a shaft of sunlight making its way through the smoky gloom. Their debut album *Idylls* (on Projekt) invited listeners into their shimmering world. With *Ardor*, their second release for Projekt, *Love Spirals Downwards* seem to have become more comfortable with these listeners and embrace them with their bare souls. In February, I spoke with the two members of *Love Spirals Downwards*, Ryan Lum and Suzanne Perry, about the change between albums, the band and their impending tour.

Idylls seems a lot darker than *Ardor*.

That's interesting, because some people who we showed *Ardor* to before it came out said, "It's not that different" and other people said, "You guys have really changed a lot." I think it's differ-

Well, it's not like you're rockin' out or anything...

Ryan: [Laughs] No, it's just different...

Suzanne: *Ardor's* still dirge-like, I think...

Your fundamental style has stayed the same, I think it's just your approach.

Suzanne: Yeah, it's definitely a little lighter — not much lighter, though. You couldn't describe it as light, but when you compare it to *Idylls* it's kinda like one step above suicidal, you know... [Everyone laughs]

Ryan: I don't think it's suicidal...

Me neither. Melancholy, maybe...

Suzanne: Yeah, it's not angry enough to be suicidal.

Why do you think you got a little lighter?

Suzanne: I think it was this drive to create something different and then that just happened to be the product. It's not something that we think about a lot at all.

Did things in your life start going better? You're not suicidal anymore?

Ryan: [Laughing] We were never suicidal. Probably now I'm more suicidal than I was during *Idylls* so... Not to say I'm suicidal but if you had to put it in degrees I'm probably more than I was then.

Suzanne: I think [life's] pretty different, but I don't know how much it's reflected in [the music]. Huh. I mean, I don't notice a serious change in my psyche where I'm going around with a bigger smile.

How did Love Spirals Downwards come about?

Suzanne: Well, Ryan has been doing music for a long time, starting out with guitar and stuff and I've always been singing and I never really thought of singing professionally or singing to produce something like a CD or to be in a band; I just always sang. It's actually been this really natural drive for me to use my voice and sing, but I never thought of doing that until Ryan and I started going out romantically. About a year and a half went by and it never occurred to us, "Hey, let's do something musically together." One time we just got in the studio and the first song we ever made was "Forgo," which is on *Idylls*. I had never written a song before. I just got in there and started humming in the microphone and that's how it happened. And we listened to it and we thought, "Hey, that's not too bad!" And then we just made a couple more and just sent them out.

How are your songs written?

Suzanne: Underwater. We do everything underwater.

Ryan: For the most part I'll always have the music almost done. Sometimes I won't have the drums finished, or I might have a guitar part or two left but the music's done first. Once I have that done I'll bring it over to Suzanne and she'll start humming and making up vocal parts. From there, we'll start getting words fitted in to it, we'll record that, and then I mix the song down and it's done. It could take many months.

So you have a live tour coming

Ryan: That's being discussed right now. That's not certain or finalized yet.

Suzanne: Well, that's what Pat [from Projekt] is telling everyone.

Yeah, he sent out a letter to everyone saying you might do a tour.

Suzanne: Yeah, 'cause he knows better than to say it'll definitely happen. Let's just cut to the chase on this one. The thing is, I wanna do it but Ryan's kinda dragging his feet on it so I figured if I told Pat [Ogl, of Projekt] we would do it and then he sent out a letter, then we'd do it.

Ryan: Oh, is that what happened?!

Suzanne: Kind of...

Ryan: [Laughing] You went around me and behind my back? Thanks.

Suzanne: No, we didn't go around your back but you were there when I said, "I think we can do it." 'Cause at first I was starting to doubt whether we could do it, but now I'm just thinking we might be boring so...

Ryan: Yeah, we could do it. It'd just be two of us — it'd be acoustic with her singing and me playing acoustic guitar.

Suzanne: It could be boring, Andrew.

I really don't think it would be boring. I think the type of people that it would attract would go there expecting the type of music you play and be overwhelmed by your performance.

Ryan: Maybe so. Maybe if we do it I'll be really surprised that people won't be yawning or throwing beer cans at us or something. We're really not much of a live band as you can tell from how we make music — it just kind of emerges from me messing around in the studio — so we never really rehearse our songs...

Reprinted from Ink Spots #19, April 1995

Suzanne: Well, we've been rehearsing, though.

Ryan: Yeah, for this potential acoustic thing. But it's really weird, though, to have these songs (some on *Idylls* have been out for years), and going back and playing them again now. The only time they existed is us recording them — we never rehearsed the songs once in our lives. I'm not kidding. There are a few songs where I forgot what I did, I have to go back and try and figure out the guitar parts.

If you could be the supporting band for any artist, who would it be? Assuming that anyone would tour.

[Long thinking pause and "Hmmm"s]

Suzanne: I guess Slowdive would be kinda cool. Portishead would be really cool 'cause I think that would attract the same following, but the whole night might be a little too mellow.

Ryan: I never really thought about that. I thought Slowdive would be cool when you said that...

Suzanne: There are some bands that I think would be fun, like, um...

Like Gwar?

[Laughter, then more contemplative silence]

Ryan: [Laughing] I don't know, you're asking a band that doesn't think much about live stuff so you might have trouble getting an answer from us.

Suzanne: When I think about who we would play with... I guess that's not how I think about our

music; it's definitely a lot more isolated. And just my whole way I think about myself as a musician... I don't even think about it like that. It's not part of my identity. I don't go around saying "I'm in a band." That's usually like the last thing I mention. It's not that I don't love it, but I think it just has something to do with my scorn for those musician types who go around and carry a guitar or something — "I'm in a band."

Ryan: They give you their guitar picks after you meet them.

Suzanne: It's just seriously lame and I just can't stand that.

Oh come on, you don't have any guitar picks that say "Love Spirals Downwards" on them?

Ryan: I was kinda joking 'cause Suzanne liked this one guy she worked with...

Suzanne: Yeah, I was like 18.

Ryan: He was a bass player and he gave her his guitar pick.

Suzanne: This happens to women all the time, I don't know if you know, Andrew.

No, I've never heard of this.

Ryan: You've never given a girl your guitar pick?

No, never. My hair pick...

Suzanne: When I was going to clubs a lot, I don't know why but men will pick up on you and they will give you their guitar pick. No kidding. There's no phone number on it, there's no name, it's just a guitar pick. They will give it to you and they will think that that will turn you on.

Ryan: I never knew that. I sorta tried it since she told me about it and it works.

How many guitar picks do you have?

Ryan: Oh, I have hundreds and hundreds.

Suzanne: No, he's asking me.

Ryan: Oh... [Much laughter] Yeah, how many *do* you have, Suzanne?

Suzanne: Well, honestly, I lost the ones that I had gotten. I didn't have a collection. I'd say maybe five or six.

You should've made a necklace out of them.

Suzanne: Yeah. That's not a lot, but those are the ones that I took. "I can't take that from you." Like it's so valuable. "I cannot take it. You need that for your performance tomorrow."



The conversation started to ramble around then. Talking to Suzanne and Ryan felt more like talking to old friends than actually doing a standard band interview, proving that not all gothic or ethereal-oriented musicians are pretentious and self-obsessed, a nasty preconception that many people have about people involved in this genre. Check out *Ardor* if you can. And keep your eyes peeled for upcoming tour dates because if they do decide to tour, Florida is on their itinerary. That's a concert that should not be missed. For more information on Love Spirals Downwards, contact Projekt, Box 1591, Garden Grove, CA 92642-1591 ■