



love spirals downwards



While the beautiful sounds of California's projekt records have almost become a genre of their own, it was back in 1992 that I first discovered the label, through a compilation entitled *From Across This Gray Land 3*. The album's opener was a lush combination of dreamy, swirling guitar and blissful vocals, and I was instantly hooked. That song was "Mediterranea" by **Love Spirals Downwards**.

The duo of Ryan Lum and Suzanne Perry have since released two successful albums on projekt, 1992's *Idylls* and, most recently, *Ardor*. LSD is perhaps one of the few bands linked to the '80s 4AD sound that are actually worth discovering. Knowing how painfully quiet and difficult some ether-celebs are to interview (**Mazzy Star**, **Cranes**) I worried a bit about these two. A quick call proved my fears unfounded; they were both delightful and eager to discuss their band. In fact, Suzanne put me at ease instantly with the simple phrase: "Wow, a female interviewer, how nice." She then went on to recount her memories of beach harassment. But that's another story.

I began my probe with the most obvious queries about their background, musical and romantic.

"We grew up in the same area of California," explained Suzanne. "But we didn't know each other until we started dating. We were both doing music, but I never thought I would make a career out of singing. We decided to try doing a couple of songs together, so we went into the studio and recorded a three-song demo."

"We weren't trying to be a band," Ryan continued. "So we were shocked and surprised when there was any response at all. We mailed out the tape to three companies, 4AD, creation, and projekt, who we didn't know about, we heard of it through a friend of a friend. Sam [Rosenthal, projekt's founder] wrote us back a letter of interest. He didn't say he would sign us right away, or anything, but he wanted to hear more stuff. We eventually ended up on the *Gray Land 3* compilation."

So while hundreds of artists sweat it out trying to "sell themselves" to labels, LSD did it without a thought. And they weren't exactly prepared. "We weren't expecting anything," explained Suzanne, "so we had to scramble to make more songs for Sam to listen to. I call us a "Made to Order" band; we write only what is required."

That writing is divided between them. "I do the music first," said Ryan, "and when it's almost done, Suzanne will listen to it, then we both make up the vocal parts. We don't rehearse or anything, I just start laying the tracks."

"We really have to focus and push to get from that first stage to the finished song," Suzanne admitted. "It's really crucial that I do it in a concentrated couple of days to keep the mood. If I'm really not in the mood to do vocals, I'll at least go in the studio and give it a try. Then at least I can say I had no ideas and wasn't just lazy."

I ask Perry about the intangible vocal style she shares with so many other female singers of the genre. I want to know what propels one to whisper, gurgle and disguise words and phrases; is it perhaps a lack of confidence in the lyrics themselves?

"That's a very good question," replied the singer. "That really makes me think about my purpose for making music. It's amazing how little I think about my music. Like I never realized all the images it evokes. The song "Write in Water" has so many different subconscious levels, and I spent so little time even planning it. I have a really serious time experiencing it, and listening to it, that's when it's strongest for me. But I guess I don't have a lot of confidence in my ability to write. I don't necessarily think it's my gift. I'm not bad, but that's not the means by which I express myself. And I don't know how much I want to reveal of myself, like the really personal stuff." "That adds to the fantasy of our music," added Ryan. "It's different from ordinary experience."

Listening to LSD is best done in the dark (oh, what a surprise and oddity here!) with a set of headphones affixed to eager ears. They will put you to sleep, and when you stir with a jolt you'll quickly rewind so as not to miss a bit of their magic. On *Ardor*, the stories are a little more audible, the snippets of French, mimicked Italian and Latin less prominent.

"There is more English on *Ardor*," admitted Perry. "But I don't want to do a **Cocteau Twins**. On their last record you can finally understand what she's saying, but it's so disappointing. There's this beautiful, transcendent music, and her singing about being molested ruins the whole thing for me. It brought them down to earth, in my mind."

The sensual, flighty tone of Perry's voice isn't the only reason that LSD gets compared to The Cocteau Twins, but it certainly doesn't help the lazy writer who seeks simply to pigeon-hole (this one included, I suppose).

"One review I saw compared us to the CT, circa *Garlands* album. I know they have to compare us to something, but how about **Slowdive**, or something not so obvious," expressed Lum.

Love Spirals Downwards may venture out on a first round of live performances this summer. Having played but a few times, and long ago (as **The Flower People**), the rumoured stops in New York, Chicago, etc. will no doubt be the stuff of scrapbooks.



for more info on projekt
releases, write for a catalogue:
PO Box 1591, garden grove, ca
92642, USA