



Love Spirals Downwards

by Pat
Ogl

The duo of Ryan Lum and Suzanne Perry had no clear musical ambition or even a band name when they contacted Projekt Records. They jokingly called themselves as "The Flower People".

The response to their first full length cd, "Idylls" was no joke. At that time Projekt was run out of Sam's house with a fairly small advertising budget. Nonetheless the cd sold over 10,000 copies. Two years later the bands sophomore effort "Ardor" again sold over 10,000 copies--this time taking far less time to do so.

Eschewing comparisons to "shoegazer" and "gothic" acts Love Spirals Downwards have crafted a following that transcends genre and even generational "pidgeon holes". The label has received enthusiastic fan letters from teeny boppers and sitting Circuit Court Judges.

The band has gradually evolved over the past five years. "Idylls" dreamy aura, layered acoustic guitars and electronic was taken in a ever so slightly darker direction on "Ardor". The band's third release "Ever" combines elements of their acoustic live show with Ryan's trance ambient influences. Currently a remix single for "Madras" off the "Ever" cd is in the works.

LSD: Well, I don't remember it being that overwhelming of a response. But, I suppose that many people had an initial liking to our music was because our songs are pretty songs, which is something a bit rare in music today.

Pat: Don't you think a good deal of the other artists on Projekt make "pretty" music? I can tell you that there was a pretty big reaction to your songs on that compilation...

LSD: Sure, most of the rest of the projekt artist make music that is pretty. But I think that we are the only one's whose main aesthetic is in making a pretty and otherworldly sort of sound. Most of the others have something else going on in their music as well, more self-expressionistic things. I'm not saying that makes us better or worse than the others, but I think it makes our music stand out a bit, we have a quality that is distinct.

Pat: If you had to recommend one (and only one) of your own songs which would it be and why?

LSD: That's tough. Maybe 'Will You Fade' from Ardor, because that song has most of the elements of our sound all in one song. Plus, it's one of my favorites.

Pat: Describe the "elements of your sound" (as you put it)? What makes the band "tick" musically?

LSD: It's the combo of the voice and harmonies, acoustic guitars, spacey electric guitars, and the mellow break-beat drums. It's kind of been the underlying sound of our 3 albums I think. It's starting to feel kind of dated for me now though; too shoegazey, and that whole thing has been a bit dead without any more albums from say Slowdive or My Bloody Valentine. We're finding new ways to get our sound without relying on that setup.

Pat: You have mentioned in numerous interviews the essential "meaninglessness" of your music, that you are not making a point or telling a story rather try-

ing to achieve a purely ascetic result: why is that? What part of you did that come from?

LSD: I've just never felt that art must have meaning; it just is. It's sort of a funny fallacy that most people seem to insist upon everything in the world as having meaning. What is the meaning of a sunset? What's wrong with just simply experiencing it? Asking the meaning of it seems to make no sense, unless perhaps you try to explain it in scientific terms. But that doesn't explain a thing about the experience of it. Likewise, our art exists without demanding that it has some higher or more important existence apart from the experience of it. It's meaning is irrelevant. Maybe we are too Zen.

Pat: There has been a change in that instead of sounds and nonsense you have gradually begun to use lyrics...what prompted this? Did Suzanne finally learn to read?

LSD: I recently realized that on Ever, there are no songs that have nonsense words. Everything is in plain English with some German on "Lieberflusse". Though, this doesn't mean that the lyrics necessarily have any meaning. I don't believe that anything in particular prompted us to work with lyrics this way. It's just part of the constant evolution of our music and getting bored of doing the same old thing over again. It's fun to do things differently that what were used to.

Pat: I know that Suzanne is extremely nervous about playing live...Does that anxiety hinder or enhance your performance?

LSD: It can do both, but we try to direct it in a way so that it helps us. We both try to get focused and be relatively calm before we play. We are almost in our own little world that only the two of us are in. And whatever anxiety we might have on stage, we often lighten it up in between songs by Suzanne telling

some loopy stories or an odd joke. I think that creates a warm atmosphere that makes people feel at ease and makes them enjoy the music more.

Pat: Are YOU nervous live? Suzanne's extreme stage fright over shadows any nervousness you might show...

LSD: I am. I don't know where it comes from; it's just a natural thing too feel, something your body does to you. I remember reading how Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead would still get nervous before going on stage, and he must have played over a thousand shows in his lifetime. But after I get up there and get through a song or two, I feel fine. And sometimes, I really feel incredibly great, on those special moments when everything really comes together and the music takes me over.

Pat: Your performance at this year's Projekt Festival will be the first major show where you have integrated electronic elements into the performance. What caused the change from purely acoustic shows?

LSD: I thought it'd be fun to do some different things live. We already tried it out at one show before and I thought it was a fun change of pace. It gets old doing the same thing all the time. Plus, that enable

us to play songs that we'd never have been able to do with just the acoustic guitar, particularly new songs.

Pat: Some think of live performance as a promotional tool and others as an art form in itself independent of other musical endeavors. How do you view playing live?

LSD: For us, I don't see it as a big promotional tool. It's not like we've sold way more records as a result of playing live. I do it because it's fun, most of the time at least, and it's a new way for me to experience our songs. I like the travelling too.

Pat: It seems that "Ever" and certainly the "sideways forest" single are a bridge from earlier work into an airier (and if you'll forgive the term) "trip-hop" future. Is there a direction change coming for Love Spirals Downwards?

LSD: It's hard to say because I'm in the middle of making new songs right now and I haven't had the time to stop and analyze it. I've been using more computers, synths, and sampling lately so our new stuff is bound to sound a bit different than our previous albums. We're not becoming a trip-hop band though, but there may be some of that here and there. The same with Drum and Bass and ambient. As always, I make what deeply moves me and what

feels right and don't worry about what kind of genre it is. I probably cut across too many genres anyway to be considered as being a part of any genre. I'm just some guy that makes music in my bedroom. Scenes and genres don't exist in my bedroom.

Pat: do you even think of such nonsense of "direction changes" and genres? What genre would you place yourself in if you were forced at gunpoint to choose?

LSD: No, as I said, I don't care for all that categorizing. I've seen all too many bands that only care about such stuff, and consequently miss the boat when it comes to the art of it all. It's like 'we want to appeal to these people at these clubs and be considered cool in that scene'. Rather than making

music, such folk should just focus their energies into becoming club gods, because that's what they really want anyway. But if I were forced at gunpoint, I'd say our music was either "pretty music" or maybe "shoegazer".

Pat: You have been compared ad nauseum to bands such as Cocteau Twins, Dead Can Dance and even Enya...Are there any particularly spurious comparisons you would like to



refute or trash?

LSD: People, by nature, need to compare x to y. I do it all the time. So I guess, in general, we are closer in sound to them than we are to The Notorious B.I.G. But most comparisons break down quite easily once you try to push it, once you try to go past making a general comparison. I mean, if you pull out one of our albums and one of the above-mentioned bands' albums and try to point to specific items that are the same, you won't find any. Cocteau Twins...

Pat: what is correct and what is incorrect in the often made "Cocteau Twins" comparison?

LSD: Well, we both make pretty music, and the lyrics are hard to pick out. That's pretty much it. But put on our album Ever, and put on any of theirs, and while both may be pleasant, they are worlds apart. It's just an easy comparison to make. Hell, I read a review of Ever in (in Option) that said we sounded too much like our obvious heroes the Cranberries! I laughed. Journalists often seem to not know much about music, let alone art.

Pat: When is the Love Spirals Downwards "World Tour"?

LSD: Never!