

BEACH HOUSE'S 'TEEN DREAM'

Baltimore's latest indie rock hope

Thrift stores help the band achieve its unusual sonic mix

BY CHRIS RICHARDS

This rehearsal space smells like a thrift store — which is to say it smells like dust and history and magic.

It's an old warehouse in Baltimore's Fells Point neighborhood where the dry-wall is draped in zebra-print bedsheets and Barbie-pink afghans. Victoria Legrand and Alex Scally of the ascendant indie rock duo Beach House apologize for the mess — a charming clutter of bicycles and boom-boxes and tambourines and hula hoops.

"Having this space is, like, one of the greatest things in the entire world," Scally says, plugging in a space heater. He and Legrand sit surrounded by the arsenal of vintage keyboards and organs — more than 20 in all — used on the band's new album "Teen Dream," one of the most anticipated indie releases of 2010.

Arriving Tuesday, it'll be the band's third album and its first for macro-indie Sub Pop Records. Built around Legrand's luxuriant contralto, it's a sumptuous, slow-moving affair that smudges the line between sensual warmth and melancholic cool.

But can a sumptuous, slow-moving album launch a band to stardom in today's impatient indie rock landscape? An appearance on "Late Night With Jimmy Fallon" and a performance at the Sundance Film Festival this month should help, but for a band with such a buzzed-about future, Beach House's rehearsal space suggests a band that spends its creative hours exploring some enchanted, forgotten past.

"We're really obsessed with thrifting together," says Scally of the platonic duo's frequent junk shop excursions. "Finding clothes and finding these organs, it's a huge part of our sound. Using these crappy things and renewing them and loving them. Loving crap that other people don't want."

Bruised synthesizers and rickety organs sputter and hum across the album's 10 tracks, with Legrand's an-

drogynous mowl giving each song a slight erotic charge. "We know we can feel, awake and unreal," she sings on "Lover of Mine," evoking Fleetwood Mac swallowed up in a quicksand of glitter.

The video for "Lover of Mine" provides another visual entirely: a strange

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backyard wrestling match. "Teen Dream" will be released with a bonus DVD of 10 music videos they commissioned, one for each song. And when the duo hits the road in February, they'll be touring with faux-fur stage props of their own design. The bandmates obviously care about their image, but still try to remain oblivious to the hype machine currently ramping up behind them.

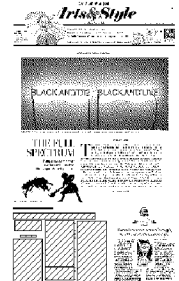
"Hype always depends on having some kind of gimmick," Scally says. "I don't really think our music has that. . . . I don't think it's going to be this crazy, explosive thing."

Still, the pair seems ready to flirt with the heights reached by tour mates and friends Grizzly Bear and Fleet Foxes — breakout bands who have appeared on the latest "Twilight" soundtrack and "Saturday Night Live," respectively.

Beach House quietly announced its own burgeoning ambitions last year by leaving Washington-based Carpark Records, a smaller imprint that released the group's first two discs. "We really loved being on Carpark," says Legrand. "But Sub Pop could offer certain things — a larger network of people that would help us expand our art."

Sub Pop's Sue Busch, a self-described super-fan who signed the band, thinks Beach House is fully capable of staking its claim in an indie rock wilderness dominated by Fleet Foxes and Grizzly Bears and Animal Collectives and Bands of Horses.

"Even if they come from the same world as a lot of those other bands, they just infuse something that's completely different," Busch says. "Their music is almost sexy in a weird way that none of



those bands are.”

Legrand isn't so concerned with where Beach House fits in the grand scheme. “I like that people are just sort of confused,” she says of today's music consumers. “That's a really interesting place to be.”

Some have tried to contextualize the group as black sheep in the greater ether of Baltimore's weirdo-rock scene — a community of musicians that Scally says isn't as homogenous as many assume. If anything, he thinks Baltimore gives artists the freedom to explore.

“It's a really good place to be inspired and work and get consumed by your own thoughts. It's not like New York where there's so much stimulation from everyone around you,” he says. “People come here for school and they either get sickly seduced into it and start living a really

weird life, or [they] run away like, ‘Who would want to be in Baltimore?’ ”

SOUND

CHECK:

Victoria Legrand and Alex Scally utilize used instruments.

Some of the band's most resonant accolades

have come from big names in the Big Apple. Julian Casablancas of the Strokes has pledged his love for the band while Grizzly Bear singer Ed Droste recently described “*Teen Dream*” on Twitter as “insanely perfectly gorgeous amazingness.” Last year, Grizzly Bear recruited Legrand to sing on “Slow Life,” the band's contribution to “The Twilight Saga: New Moon” soundtrack.

“Ed is an amazing person. Very loving,” Legrand says. “He's almost *too* supportive of our band.”

Even if Droste's “insanely perfectly gorgeous amazingness” description of “*Teen Dream*” isn't hyperbolic, don't call the album a masterpiece.

“I hope we never create a definitive work,” Scally says. “We just want it to be a step.”

Legrand agrees. “That's the key to staying alive,” she says. “Realizing that everything's just a step.”

richardsc@washpost.com

Beach House kicks off its U.S. tour at the Black Cat on March 26. The videos from “*Teen Dream*” will be screened at the Wind-Up Space in Baltimore on Jan. 31.

ON WASHINGTONPOST.COM For a tour of Beach House's rehearsal space, visit washingtonpost.com/clicktrack



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RIGHT AT HOME: Victoria Legrand and Alex Scally prefer to make music in slower-pace Baltimore.



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