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Pop & Hiss

The L.A. Times music blog

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CMJ closing interviews: Gliss and Mibbs from PacDiv

10:36 PM PT, Oct 28 2008

The CMJ Music Marathon is known as a proving ground, but for some bands, it's also just icing on the cake of industry approval and support. We caught up with David Reiss, guitarist and drummer for punk-psych-delic trio Gliss just before his return over the weekend to Long Beach. (The other band members were sticking around for a Jets game.)

Gliss is finishing up a new album, "Devotion Implosion," following two EPs over the last couple of years. And though they've toured with Billy Corgan, and opened for several high-profile rock acts, mainstream love eludes them. Signed to indie imprint Rykodisc, and made up of Reiss, Martin Klugman and Victoria Cecilia, the group's CMJ showcase in the gritty basement of the Delancy featured 9 songs played to a rapt audience.



So, how did CMJ go for you?

You can't really tell it's CMJ. It's not like SXSW, where all the action happens on a couple secluded blocks; this was like a regular New York night. It was great. We finally got to meet people at the label. They were incredibly supportive of the new sound we have. A lot of them were really pleased with how we've grown in the last year. It was really cool to hear it from them.

Can you explain that new sound?

I won't say more "mature." But it's definitely an evolution. We definitely have that indie rock, kind of garage sound. We're atmospheric and we're psychedelic too.

This being your first CMJ, what did you think about the show at the Delancy on Friday night? Did you mind playing in the basement?

I'm not into the [acoustics] so much. But I kind of like that dirty, dingy street-vibe energy. It's also fun to play the Bowery Ballroom, where you have much bigger space to play. There's something to be said about playing those thrasher dive bars. I thought it was a pretty good show. It's hard to judge when you're playing on strange equipment.

You had some problems with your guitar on the last song of the night, "Blue Sky." You guys stopped playing, but recovered pretty quickly, what happened?

The guitar malfunctioned. The bridge on that Fender Jazz Master was a shady bridge. That shady bridge jacked up the main string I used on that whole song. You gotta roll with the punches.

Mibbs from PacDiv

For all intents and purposes, CMJ caters to an indie rock crowd. With more than 1,000 on the

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performance schedule, there's not much to choose from if you're a rap fan. But L.A.'s PacDiv, by far one of the most accomplished and in-demand hip-hop acts at CMJ, turned in a stellar show, packed with NY underground talent.

The group remains in N.Y. to open for Busta Rhymes, surely a result of some nice Universal Motown connections. Group member Mibbs chatted with us about the group's success at CMJ.

You sound sick.

I'm not used to this cold. The first day I got a cold.

What was it like, as a rap group, playing a largely rock-focused festival?

Since we heard about the festival, everyone said that we should do it. Hip-hop belongs anywhere, especially if it's good. That was an honor to be one of the big names at the festival. And everyone who had doubts about us, for them to see us ... it was like, "Wow."

To be invited to do a rock festival, that's really dope. That shows that you're more of a musician than just a rapper. It doesn't just hit one audience.

Why do you think your music translates so well to a non-LA crowd?

Because, being in N.Y. ... these people are real. They believe "realness." Good music transcends any kind of limits. It doesn't matter where you're from -- East Coast dudes can feel it; Down South dudes can feel it.

Rap music is so regional. At what point did you know it was going to go well, that the N.Y. recognition was there?

Just the people that came up to us and said, "Hey, you guys are really good." The first night I got there I met Jay-Z up at the bar at Santos. It was our first night out here. He was at the bar, no bodyguard, and we were like, "Whoa!"

Did he say he was a fan?

Well, he said that he's listening. He wants to see where it's going to go. And so do we.

So, you've got a major-label deal. At this point, what's the status of your official CD release?

In spring of '09, we should be putting out the "Grown Kid Syndrome." We're putting it out around the springtime, because that's when kids are about to leave school. They start to grow up.

Any more mix tapes on the horizon?

No official release date, but we have "Church League Champions" coming.

That have something to do with church sports leagues?

If you gotta start somewhere, that's where you start. Mad dudes who don't even go to church play [a sport] in the church league. We're giving people stuff in album format. It's mostly original joints.

-- Camilo Smith

Update: Photos were originally attributed to Camilo Smith but Tyler Brittenham took the top photo of Gliss' David Reiss and Amanda Lopez shot the photo of Mibbs from PacDiv.

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