

Goat Girl

Bio

Across 19 tracks in 40 minutes, Goat Girl’s self-titled debut creates a half-fantasy world out of a very dirty, ugly city reality. In the group’s words “Simply put, it’s an album that comes from growing up in London and the first hand experience of our city’s devolution. We wanted to think of it as this place seen not necessarily just through our eyes, but someone who can’t get past the abnormalities and strange happenings that exist in our city. We think this gives the freedom lyrically and musically to explore unspoken truths and emotions that we all as humans feel.”

This world is populated by creeps and liars, lovers, dreamers and wonderful lunatics. It’s a very English album - sharp-eyed observations like The Kinks, louche rage like The Slits - but it’s also full of swampy swaggering guitars and Lottie’s filthy drawl. “It wasn’t exactly intentional to have this warped country sound, but I think that was initially what we were all drawn to and inspired by, bands that existed in a lo-fi, dissonant, scratchy context.”

They are firmly a part of the burgeoning, close-nit south London scene that includes Shame, Bat-Bike, Madonnatron, Horsey, Sorry and many more. “The Windmill and those Trashmouth gigs are so important. It’s the regularity of it - you see the same people again and again at different gigs and different venues. We help each other - I put you on, you put me on - because we genuinely like each other’s music. The Windmill is an important place for us, it was the first space that our music made sense to exist within. We’d played gigs all over before but never really settled in a comfortable environment, which is what the Windmill is. It’s a safe space where music is genuinely listened to and appreciated, and where laws and licensing haven't reached over to ruin the venue.”

This live freedom enabled Goat Girl to think freely when approaching the recording of their material. “We wanted it to have a similar expression to our live sets and so knew from the start that a tape-based approach would work for us, there’s less awareness of trying to achieve perfection as you can’t edit out mistakes and so you allow them to occur instead”.

“We were told about this producer in Streatham who fitted our needs, so that’s who we went to: Dan Carey. His studio is just one room in the bottom of his house which was something we were really drawn to. It felt like a really relaxed and natural environment to be able to record within, which had significance in the way we as a band were allowed to play, you can hear the comfortability in the energy of our sound. Also playing together in one room, with Dan constantly bending and experimenting with the final live output, we were all able to feed off of each-other, rather than the separation we were used to with grand hi-fi studios we’d previously experienced.”

“Dan’s like a mad scientist, you watch him walk around the studio meddling with all his analog instruments, lost in his world, it’s so nice and inspiring to be around. We wanted a producer who would tell us what they think will work, rather than us telling them - we’re not producers. We wanted someone to think about it in a new context, otherwise what’s the point?”

“Everything was recorded to tape, which meant that we were able to get the foundations of each song down very quickly and eliminated any irrelevant hassle. It also meant that there was a lot more thought put in to the pre-production of the album instead and how we would allow the songs to flow in a cohesive manner from one to the next to create a story rather than an album made up of singles.” The simplicity of this initial process is reflective of the way Dan Carey works with his music label Speedy Wunderground. This philosophy of writing and recording a piece of music in a day in an effort to capture the raw, first creation moment of live music is an ethos that similarly inspired Goat Girl.

“We then went on to focus more intensely on the layers and textures of each song and the different contexts they could sit within, rather than just being the obvious thrashy guitar music that’s achieved live. It seems all too easy to exist in that kind of world with the instrumentation of our band and so now was our chance to transcend that feeling. The joy with working in Dan’s studio is that you’re surrounded by these possibilities to sound more electronic, with such a vast array of different analog synths and sounds to choose from, we started by adding the swarmatron, to the mellotron, drum machines and so on.” This electronic experience is important to Goat Girl, who resist being boxed into an indie guitar based genre that definitely shouldn’t define them. “As with every band, commodification is inevitable, and to be able to experiment and evolve with our music in the recording process has allowed us different possible future routes for our music to take.”

This desire to develop their sound beyond one form also comes from the varied tastes in each member’s musical inspirations and contributions. Lottie says, “I think the wide range of music we listen to feeds in through different ways. I personally like a lot of experimental electronic music, as well as quite highly produced pop which I think feeds into the way I think about melody and structuring.” Goat Girl also have diverse audible inspirations that range from krautrock to bossa bova, jazz to blues.

Lead single “Cracker Drool” is at once jaunty and sinister, a dark tale full of swirling guitar, echoing vocals and synthetic drum hits that stumbles and gurgles straight into “Slowly Reclines,” a track that is equally sinister and considerably heavier. The album was recorded in segments - two, three or four songs at a time, full of headlong energy, divided by interludes that create glimpses of an even stranger parallel universe.

“Creep” is, predictably and grimly enough, inspired by actual events - *Creep on the train / I really want to smash your head in*. “You want to think you could stand up for yourself in that kind of situation,” says Lottie. “But then a lot of the time a quiet politeness takes over and you act like nothing has happened - even though in your head everything has happened. To be able to have the opportunity to twist a sequence of events into whatever story you want lyrically, allows you to feel like you’ve done something, and that becomes the reality for you. I think that’s the purpose for a lot of the lyrics in the songs, to act out that power role that isn’t necessarily a truth, but the freedom of writing gives you that sense.”

On “Country Sleaze,” Lottie sings about sex, about squelch and stickiness, in a way that embraces visceral reality and defeats shame. “If you say you’re sexually free, as a woman, society still deems that a bad thing. But really it’s a beautiful thing to be confident in yourself - to know that you can have sex and it doesn’t have to mean anything and that doesn’t make you a bad person.” Ellie smiles: “That song is quite disgusting, in a good way. It’s not trying to be nice, it’s not a love song.”

The interludes were improvised - “Rosy had the foundations for the piano and then we just sat in the studio for three hours getting drunk with the lights off and the smoke machine on. That’s why they sound so weird, they’re semi-real.” And the closing track, “Tomorrow,” is a curveball - a gorgeous, unsettling rendition of the Bugsy Malone song that ends with dawn-chorus birds and the feeling of new possibilities after a long and messy night.