

MUSIC

L.A.'s Young People come east.

By Johnny Dwyer

Youngsters

Three Los Angeles refugees miss their cars.

When I sit down with the Young People, I immediately look at their hands. From the dark, expansive tracks on this trio's self-titled first album on 5 Rue Christine (Kill Rock Stars' experimental sister label), I expect them to be ruddy, cracked and stained with dirt from working the fields, where blood and bones have faded into the soil unnoticed for generations.

They're not. They're spotless. From where I'm sitting in the temporary Brooklyn home of Katie Eastburn, whose haunting vocals hold together the temperamental, fragmented instrumentation of Jarrett Silberman and Jeffrey Rosenberg, the band looks good and well-rested. Nonetheless, my rough, bucolic vision of them is the sort of reverie their music triggers.

The Young People are recent L.A. emigres. Rosenberg and Silberman have ties to several West Coast bands, including Pink and Brown and Uphill Gardeners. Eastburn danced with the Janet Pants Dans Theater out there, but wasn't involved in music. They're biding their time in New York until late April when they begin a U.S. tour with Liars, followed by European dates in June. Some are surprised to find them in New York, but for them it just made sense.

"It was just time for me to come back to the East Coast," says Eastburn, a Nashville native, who went to school in Rhode Island. "Jeff and I have been gypsies for a long time."

"A city's just another city," Rosenberg adds.

The band came together in January 2001, with the idea of forming a country band but, as Eastburn explains, "In our first practice we realized it was not a country band at all."

The Young People became something entirely different. Their sound is that of a small crowd trickling through a room, picking up an electric guitar here, a violin there. Feedback swells, a few feverish chords are strummed, a kick drum is stomped, then stops and disappears; the doors and windows are open, the furniture creaks, dishware falls to the floor. At the center of this is Eastburn's keening. Her stark lyrics on "Ron Jeremy" lead to this type of piece:

Wasted all this time

Come along and put out the light

Maybe it's ours, to keep

Oh, maybe it's ours to keep

Locked up in a drawer

In a safe far beneath the floor

Lay me down to sleep

Oh, lay me down to sleep

All of this sounds familiar, though. Melodically, it's grounded in American traditional music—bluegrass, country, blues—but is still off-centered and unpredictable.

"Any good band will create a landscape you'll need to learn to navigate," says Rosenberg.

Eastburn recalls a soundman in Albuquerque describing their music: "It's borderline noise, but a little better."

"We really liked that comment," she deadpans.

They recorded their second album in January, which they expect to see released later this year. Each member plays each instrument, trading electric guitar, bass, violin and drums according to the track. The songs, which came together over the last year of touring, have more discernible structure and depart from the down-tempo dirges on their first album: galloping drums, vocal melodies stretching beyond the earlier influences into distinct, almost playful hooks. Eastburn even chats with children on one track, before horns roll them over.

"It's not like we're these sullen motherfuckers all the time," Silberman laughs.

One L.A. influence leans heavily on their music: driving.

"We all had cars and we listened to a lot of classic rock radio," Silberman says. For the new album, the band ripped one beat directly from the classic rock canon—which track he won't say.

"The beauty of having a car is it's like having a little studio," Eastburn says. "I would just turn off the radio and open my mouth." She'd record the lines and melodies on a tape recorder before bringing them to practice.

"In New York, you just can't do that," she says. Eastburn hasn't tried this on the subway yet. One can imagine her appearance on a Code Orange-clenched 6 train triggering a panic: lulling through a solemn melody, she could easily be mistaken for an angel sent down to lead us through the Tribulation.

The Young People swiped their name from a Shirley Temple film about vaudeville performers who inherit a baby (Temple) at the end of a performance. The family chooses to raise the child in a simple country town, only to be snubbed by the locals who look down on show people. It's a strange parable for a band whose interpretations of traditional music reflect a typically urban isolation. The members admit they have yet to see the movie.

"We were going to rent it in L.A., but they only have the colorized version and I'm a horrible purist," says Silberman.

"Jarrett wouldn't watch that version," Eastburn added.

"God. Colorized movies look fucking horrible, I think we can all agree on that," says Silberman. "I'm sure we can find a proper black-and-white copy of that film out here."

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Theater Bio

I first saw the Janet Pants Dans Theatre, an LA-based dance trio (Katie Eastburn, Lindsey Beamish, and Jane Paik), opening for spazcore band Pink & Brown at the Meow Meow. What initially struck me was that these three ladies had the balls to stage a modern dance performance in a rock club. But even more impressive was their actual choreography; it was better and more interesting than any dance performance I'd seen, incorporating sleek and freaky modern moves with skewed concepts that were sung, acted, interpreted, and stretched apart--some of it set to punk music. It was something I could relate to, and it was artistically inspiring.

That was their first show, *Assemblage*; this week, they perform a new program entitled *black&blue* (Thurs Oct 10 at Blackbird, Sun Oct 13 at Disjecta). Jane Paik founded Janet Pants three years ago.

How is it, putting this arty modern dance in a rock club context?

Well, I've always been involved with the music scene, and with dancing, I've always wanted to tour around



Jane Paik of Janet Pants
Dans Theatre

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and perform in rock venues, because I'm not very interested in modern dance audiences; that's just not my deal. But if we perform with bands, it's accessible, and can be an introduction to people who would not normally seek out dance.

Modern dance is often too highbrow.

Yeah, it's highbrow, it costs a lot, it just isn't their thing. What we do is very DIY, but still, when we put on the show, it's well trained. That's important to me; that a level of professionalism and ability isn't just for the highbrow people. That we can do this on our level and present a show that's not sloppy.

And you're pulling from underground art, which makes it more interesting.

It is a balance between being professional and sophisticated about it, and at the same time, being like, "Fuck that, that's why I'm not doing [highbrow art]." It's the same thing with all these violin and cello players these days who play in rock bands instead of an orchestra. That's what's so exciting right now; all these people who have these highbrow abilities, but that's not their world.

Yeah, the proliferation of kids who have highbrow abilities, like you said, but are so influenced by DIY and punk culture.

When I go take dance classes with the "museum crowd," there are great dancers and people who I get along with, but at the same time I can't relate to them, really. I feel lucky to have found people who are trained and are still into this whole thing. And if I didn't dance this way, I wouldn't dance publicly. But it doesn't have to be confined to the museum crowd.

JULIANNE SHEPHERD

the Stranger

-LIVE WIRE-

Jennifer Maerz

Small Shows

Who knew that modern dance could cross over into the punk/indie rock realm so smoothly? Last week **Janet Pants Dans Theatre**, a Los Angeles production sized down to two people for this show, entertained a sadly underwhelming turnout at CoCA (probably in part due to the fact that modern dance seems like a love-it-or-leave-it kind of endeavor for most of us clueless to its merits). Their act was both visually and aurally entertaining, as the sole dancer's movements were held so precisely it was like she was being captured in a strobe light, her athletic body arching into poses on continuous freeze-frame. Her accompanying musician played electric guitar to a series of songs that wavered between sounding like early PJ Harvey and Sonic Youth, with some dark, Bret Easton Ellis-style spoken-word fragments coming out in between. Opening for Janet Pants were local boys the **Dead Science**, who poured out a delicate blend of whispered vocals with standup bass, electric guitar, and, in places, violin, casting a somber, earnest mood with music that swelled with indie rock and jazz leanings.