



scotch, cigarettes and some brilliant rock n roll

THE CHROME SIDEWALK PLANTER OF A HOME IN SAN FRANCISCO IS NEWLY SCRAWLED WITH RUDIMENTARY GRAFFITI THAT READS "DARKER MY LOVE" IN RED PAINT. THE LOS ANGELES PSYCH-ROCK BAND PLAYED HERE THE EVENING BEFORE AND CLEARLY LEFT SOME ENTHUSIASTIC FANS IN THEIR WAKE. THAT'S NOT A SURPRISE. THEIR DARK, SWIRLING GUITARS, FEEDBACK LADEN SONGS AND PSYCHEDELIC SINGING ARE INSTANTLY HAUNTING AND ENGULFING. YOU ALMOST GET SWALLOWED BY THE FUZZ AND HEAVY GUITAR, ONLY TO BE BUOYED BY THE VOCALS, MELODIC AND BEAUTIFUL. LISA BUTTERWORTH WRITES.

It's a Saturday night in L.A.'s Chinatown. Beers thump from a nearby bar and Buddhas glow in the courtyard's wishing well, perhaps a sign of the good fortune lurking in the future for this hirsute foursome. The conversation starts with a couple of beers, continues through a haze of cigarette smoke and ends with scotch on the rocks. It's clear this is how the boys of Darker My Love feel most comfortable. After the group's inception nearly six years ago, by high school pals vocalist/guitarist Tim Presley, 25, and drummer Andy Granelli, 27, things are finally beginning to click. With a background in punk and hardcore (both played in The Nerve Agents and Granelli left Darker to join The Distillers) starting Darker was a way to channel a whole new sound. "It was so limited to what you can really do," says Presley of their punk roots. "We just wanted to do stuff that we liked without being 'the band from the punk scene trying to do something different'. What better way then to start a whole new band." They've since survived relocation and a rotating lineup. In 2003 Presley met guitarist Jared Everett, 25, and bass player Rob Barbato, 26, igniting a new incarnation. In January of 2005, Granelli quit The Distillers to rejoin, sealing the lineup. Record label troubles delayed the release of their full-length, but now, a year later, they're psyched about its release and ready to record again.

Feeling rushed and having played with Granelli for only three months, Darker

recorded the self-titled album in three days. "Under the circumstances, we made a great record," says Everett. "We did the whole thing flying way high on cold medicine," Presley disclaims. "Things got really weird," Everett adds. The result is a moody masterpiece with a distinct nod to the 60's including heavy guitar-driven tracks like 'Summer is Here', to the more subdued, melancholy sounds of 'I Feel Fine'.

The boys talk trash - about South by South West, the Austin, Texas music industry showcase ("It's a scatterbrained fuckfest") and the L.A. music scene ("It's every man for himself"). But the obvious respect they have is for one another's talent and the friendship that seems just as important as the music trumps any attitude. They finish each other's sentences, expand each other's thoughts. Their conversation is riddled with inside jokes and genuine laughter. When asked about his move to the West Coast from Boston, Everett says, "Just picked up and left, man. A guitar, a dream and a suitcase." Facetiousness aside, it's a dream they all harbour. Two days after spotting the leading graffiti, the tag is gone. Scrubbed clean with barely a remnant left. But the band? These guys are just getting started.

Photography Heather Culp
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