

MUSIC

Roll (Film) With It

Head Like a Kite's Cinemaniacal Pop

by Chris McCann

"WHERE SHOULD WE say we are?" Trent Moorman, drummer of Head Like a Kite, asks. In the real world, we are in a booth at the Canterbury, drinking beers as the afternoon sun angles through the smoked glass windows. "You can say we talked down at Seattle Center while riding the bumper cars," he offers. "Snow cones," suggests Dave Einmo, songwriter, singer, and maestro of the group. "We should be eating snow cones."

Hlak exude this kind of creative spontaneity on their first album, too. *Random Portraits of the Home Movie* arose from Einmo watching his family's old Super 8 movies. "Back in the '70s," he says, "you just had that three minutes to work with and you had to make decisions about what was worth recording." He says he tried to keep the songs short, too, in an attempt to mirror his own experiences with the films.

The record succeeds in that it's both entirely enjoyable and creatively invigorating. Solid hooks coexist with more esoteric work: distorted semiaudible voices; strange, inviting bleeps; and the ambient noise of an old film. Songs like "Noisy at the Circus"

(sung by Smoosh's Asya) and "A Dime and a Cigarette" cavort on the edge of a sunny wonderland, while more experimental tracks like "Tell Mommy You Want a Sip of Beer" and the moodily instrumental "Scenes from the World Trade Center 1979" challenge the listener and expand the boundaries of pop.

Einmo decided the live show (complete with samples from those home movies shown on a screen behind the band) would work best with a drummer; that's where Moorman came in. "Dave didn't have this set idea about the way things had to be; he's into putting the songs together and feeding off what's there."

Einmo has recorded pieces of six tracks for the next album, which he says will be similar to *Random Portraits*. "The songs will be playful and upbeat," he says, "but there will also be a sinister side to it." He'll use some of the Super 8 footage, but will augment it with some of the sounds he's recorded while on the road.

Sometimes that's a dangerous proposition, Moorman says. "Dave'll be driving, five o'clock traffic, he's got the map, we're

lost, and he's got his hand out the window recording a plane overhead."

"It's amazing," Einmo says. "Like the sound of those big trucks going by—that's an F-sharp. Even now live, Trent is kicking [from his electronic drums] a lot of those field recordings that don't sound anything like what they did originally."

But even with all this experimentation, Hlak don't lose focus on keeping their listeners entertained. "I don't want it to become this big artsy-fartsy concept," Einmo says. "I want to push the envelope in an interesting way, but also open it up by adding a pop and melodic element." All it takes is a listen to *Random Portraits* to see that he's succeeded; one moment we're bopping down the street to an almost-bubblegum beat and the next we're in outer space, enjoying the slightly disconcerting view.

Having a 17-shows-in-17-nights East Coast tour under their belts, Hlak are battle tested. But with all their equipment both audio and video, they sometimes run into technical difficulties while on the road. Both Einmo and Moorman say that the improvisation that results is creatively stimulating. "In Cleveland we had so many equipment problems. So Trent just starts kicking out hip-hop, 808 beats and I go and screw around on the keyboards," Einmo says. "The audience was loving it. I was almost wishing we could just keep playing like that."

When asked about how they get along

on tour, Moorman says, "We both love tacos," and they crack up. "One of the most important things about a band is chemistry," Einmo says. "Obviously the musicianship has to be there. But I think what matters is that we can have a good time and go on tour together."



HEAD LIKE A KITE That's one helluva chord, Dave.

Moorman agrees. "I think we both kinda give in to what actually happens and realize we've gotta roll with it." Roll with it they do, all the while crafting sunny, intelligent, and evocative pop fantasias. And they have fun, whether they're in the studio, on roller coasters, or even here, in the Canterbury, finishing their beers as the evening is just beginning. ■

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