The Envy Corps

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THE ENVY CORPS

INTERVIEW AND DESIGN
BY MASON VIERA
PHOTOS BY DAN MCLANAHAN
With the release of their major label debut, *The Envy Corps* are setting out to conquer new ground. Not just outside of Iowa, but across the pond to areas where most bands fear to tread. The guys are on course to be the next breakout artists of 2008, but whatever you do — don’t call them a “buzz band.”
ETHOS: Dwell will be released April 28 by Vertigo Records.

Luke Pettipoole: The album isn’t out here, actually. It’s being released in the UK.

E: Will you be able to get it through iTunes?

Scott Yoshimura: You can if you set up a UK account with a UK address. Basically, you’ll have to jump through so many hoops it’s not even worth it. You’ll be able to buy it on Amazon.com and places like that.

E: Has the leak affected your opinion on the ever-growing world of file sharing and illegal downloading?

LP: We feel like our obligation is to the fans. I don’t tell people to download it from something that I put on the Internet, it’s just there.

SY: Regardless of whether or not you like it, it’s there. People are going to download stuff and you’ve got to deal with it. You’ve got to figure out how to be OK with it because it’s just going to happen.

E: Why did you decide to name the album “Dwell?” Are we supposed to read deeper into the title?

LP: The whole thing is very simple. First of all, it’s one of my favorite words to say. “Dwell” just sounds good to me phonetically. Also, some of these songs have already been released on an EP. I just felt like we’ve been living inside some of these songs for three years. This is three years of our life.

E: That’s a long time to still be playing the same songs. Do you ever find yourselves bored on stage with the older material?

LP: We recorded around 25 songs for the album. When we got everything together, we kind of decided that there should be a mixture of the old and the new.

SY: I think it’s good to keep the audience’s perspective in mind as well. Some people are going to hear these songs for the first time, and they haven’t been released on an album yet. We know that the songs are good, and they should see the light of day.

E: It seems The Envy Corps has a tradition of self-producing music. Has the band ever recorded under an actual producer before?

LP: No, other than Matt Sepanic, who’s been working with us from the beginning. We had some demos we recorded and mixed with him and thought it might work out to just do the whole record with him. It’s something we’re still talking about - whether we want to continue to produce everything ourselves or go under somebody. From what I’ve heard, some guys are just there to keep you on task and stay out of your way and let the creative process flow. It’s all about finding somebody that vibes with your band and is going to help your music be better than it already is. I think one of the reasons we just did it ourselves this time was due to our small recording budget and [wanting to] keep costs down. I think we were pretty confident that we knew what we wanted. If you’re with somebody who doesn’t get what you’re trying to do, it just wastes time.

“You can either look cool like Radiohead or look like an ass like Lars Ulrich.”

- LUKE PETTIPOOSE

E: You recorded the album at Sound Farm Studios in Jamaica, Iowa. Was there any particular reason opting to do the album in a small town as opposed to working in a bigger city?

SY: Really, the facilities at that studio are at least as good, if not better than most professional studios we’ve seen in places like New York or L.A. Sepanic is a friend of ours and he was just finishing up building his studio, so we were basically the first ones to use it. It offered us the ability to record and be close to home rather than living in a studio far away. Matt offered to work with us from whenever we wanted to start in the morning to whenever we wanted to quit at night. If that meant he only got five hours of sleep, he didn’t care. We could burn ourselves out as much as we wanted to.
E: How does a Midwest band get signed to a UK label?

SY: We had several major label interests at the time and were playing music festivals and label showcases out in New York. Nobody really came through with an offer better than what we ended up getting from Vertigo Records. That contact was actually made through MySpace and that’s how we got signed. The owner decided he wanted to check us out, so he booked a flight to the U.S. but didn’t have a passport at the time. We were a bit skeptical of the situation at first until we found out he went crazy and drove eight hours somewhere so he could get a passport, expedite it in one day, and make a flight four days after he said he could come. So he actually went way out of his way, and that was exciting to hear.

E: What was the turning point that made everyone really decide to focus on the band?

SY: I dropped out of college because I couldn’t get student loans anymore. I was on academic probation because I was horrible at school. I would sleep all day and not go to class, even though I had all this time on my hands, I was a really bad student. I probably should have evaluated that before I spent so much money on it. You know, it’s the experience I guess. I still owe a lot of money for that stupid experience. Luke was working full-time doing Internet web design stuff. We’ve all gone through probably 18,000 different stages in our lives since then. We’re not making money from this. We’re still paying our dues. Doing things that are cool to talk about doesn’t mean anything about your bank account.

LP: Right, it doesn’t mean that I’m buying your dinner.

SY: Actually, you should buy me dinner! Yeah, I was in England last month, but now my bank account is overdrawn and there’s no way to know when your next menial paycheck is going to come — when your next $100 is going to come. You have to figure it out — I don’t know how I’m going to fill my gas tank sometimes!

E: Right, but you’re not destitute?

LP: No, not like that. I make about the same [as] I did when I was working at Jimmy John’s. I wouldn’t trade it though; I’d rather be in a band out on the road or in the studio.

E: After the band was signed, your label had you living together in a house for eight months in London. Was that kind of a surreal experience, being from Ames, Iowa?

LP: It really was. We were living in a suburb of London called Streatham, which was kind of a Somalian, Arab neighborhood. When we were off tour, we were usually so broke that we couldn’t do as much as we would have liked. We did end up doing a lot of sight seeing though.

SY: At one point, we were so broke that we were all just sort of stranded in London. We had this house, which was great because we had a home base, but at the same time we were touring for six months and all living together in the same house. We all kind of
went our separate ways on the weekends and did what we could with little to no money in the most expensive city in the world.

LP: It was an experience that I don’t think I’d ever trade, but I don’t know if I’d live there under the same circumstances again.

SY: The issue with a record release on a major label is how many album sales your band can do during the first week it’s released. It’s difficult to do, especially in the UK, unless you’re a buzz band, which is like hip kids that have a style to them and dress a real specific way.

"Doing things that are cool to talk about doesn’t mean anything about your bank account."
- SCOTT YOSHIMURA

E: The Envy Corps aren’t a “buzz band”?

LP: Not at all. We don’t want to be because I don’t think those bands have substance. They last for one record, maybe two. I see us more as a band like Wilco or Radiohead or one of those bands that is a bit more mature and maybe doesn’t even see success until their late 20s or early 30s. That’s fine with me. I’d rather do things naturally and have the fan base instead of having a 17-year-old pick up on us as part of a fad then forget about us the next year.

E: With hometown bands like Slipknot and Stone Sour, Iowa is often referred to as being a “metal state.” Did you find it hard for your music to get noticed here?

SY: It really hasn’t been that difficult. I’d like to assume that a lot of that comes from the members of this band and our high attention to detail and the fact that people, whether or not they realize it, can hear that we’re actually trying really hard to make this band sound great. We’re really meticulous about making sure the songs are where they should be.

E: Since this is our “sex, drugs and rock & roll” issue of ETHOS, I think it’s only fair that we hear The Envy Corps’ favorite rock star drugs to abuse.

LP: I do a lot of soy.

SY: Mine is definitely caffeine, but ecstasy is only three pounds a hit in Manchester!

E: So drugs are cheaper over there? Are they more prevalent in the venues?

SY: Actually, the only time I ever really saw drugs being used was in Detroit of all places; so it wasn’t even over there. Those guys were snorting pinky nails full of coke all night long.

E: Are there any discernable differences between Midwestern band groupies and English ones?

LP: I think so, because the English band groupies do a good job of looking hot and trying to slide their way onto the bus. I’ve never taken advantage of it, but I remember one of them speaking in a fake German accent to me trying to get onto the bus. In the Midwest, it’s just these frumpy people that kind of like hang around you until you notice them. So I’d say to Midwesterners: if you’re going to try and hang out with us, just make a little more effort.

SY: And please don’t fake a British accent, because we can actually tell the difference.

LP: I stopped doing my fake one because it was so bad. I had one from here just from watching Monty Python and stuff, so I’d try and do it for them and they’d just be like, ‘that’s awful.’ Then they would try to do an American accent and it would be just as bad. It would just be a valley girl voice saying, ‘oh my god, no way!’ I guess that’s all they know.

E: You guys are gearing up for a tour with Eislely from April 1 through May 3. Will this be the band’s first national tour in the states?

SY: Yes. We’ve done a couple of really short stints – none of them have lasted over a week.

LP: I’m just really excited to get out there and see the country. We like Eislely and we’re friends with them, so it’s going to be fun.

E: It’s interesting to hear you talk about “getting out there,” because for your band, it isn’t just about hopping in a van and touring the states – it’s a worldwide event.

SY: Right. It’s freight; cargo; on a plane; all of our gear to another country; over the ocean; and six or possibly seven round-trip flights. It’s a lot of money and it’s not cheap.

"DWELL"
AVAILABLE APRIL 28TH
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