

AIR LOVE 2

Air release their new album 'Love 2' on October 5th.

Air is two musicians (Jean-Benoît Dunckel and Nicolas Godin) who are typically French yet altogether worldly. Many of France's best musicians have something of this, simultaneously *from* yet not *of* France. It's an argument that could be levelled at, say, Jean-Pierre Massiera, one of France's misunderstood geniuses, or Saintly Serge, adored and occasionally reviled, Jacques Dutronc, who in the '60s had a tiger (and several other wild animals) in his guitar or Marc Moulin who was so French he was actually Belgian.

But back to the World of worldly Air and their latest album, Love 2, with its grand tales of Armageddon and, more importantly, love. Sly sang, "Sing a simple song" and these boys know how to load them meaning. Take their lyrics. You can read what you like into them (and darn it there's no more fun than doing so) but the truth is the voices are as much about textures and sounds as they are meaning. Just listen to Love on their latest (best?) album Love 2, in which the single word lyric ("love", natch) is used primarily as a brass stab and keyboard motif as much as it is an actual *word*. As the Tom Tom Club once sang, "Words are stupid, words are fun, words can put you on the run"; or as Nicolas quips, "We can't do complicated sentences because otherwise we make mistakes all the time."

So what's new in the world of Air? Well, the big news this album is they've dispensed with producers and, moreover, built their own studio - it's almost entirely constructed out of analogue keyboards, as if you couldn't tell. The results are stunning. It's the most homogenous album they've made since the criminally underloved 10,000khz. Ever the conceptualists, Air wax lyrical about their new lair. "So many different aspects of the studio can suggest different things to you, the doors, the walls, the windows, the street, the architecture."

They've spent most of the past year locked in their newly refurbished studio with drummer Joey Waronker, the first time they've written an album in such a 'jam' style, something that's evident on rockers like Be a Bee or Do The Joy, in stark contrast to Pocket Symphony's minimalist meditations on which drums were barely evident

After the last album's speculative approach - dabbling with the delicately ornamental sounds of the east; it was inspired by Japan (the country and band) - Love 2 feels like a cleansing of the palate. "The album," says Nicolas, "is much more energetic, live and loose." JB adds, "Well we think it sounds fresh and we wanted everything to be fresh. We didn't try and take a conscious direction, we just tried to produce something that was alive and had energy."

Where Love 2 is at its most strident is in the vocal tracks. This time they've eschewed guests and stuck to JB's beguiling reflections and his simple but effective lyricism dealing as it perennially does with the wonderment of woman. "We always see women in a romantic and idealised way", laughs JB.

So Light Is Her Footfall is the perfect embodiment of this, as the woman in question, "an angel" receives the rapt attention of Air. The song's title was lifted from Oscar Wilde's The Canterville Ghost and, say the duo, is their vision of England (it's an England few English people would recognise but is all the greater for it). Sing Sang Sung, a tune so preposterously catchy it could start a pandemic, also has echoes of England in its alliterative title (based on English grammar lessons you may not be surprised to learn).

In Heaven's Light they have produced the nearest thing to a sure-fire hit (it screams Radio 2 playlist) for years, driven by a snare-heavy attack, its chiming keyboards take you dangerously near to the sun. Unlike poor Icarus, however, we pull away just in time to save the song and, indeed,

love itself. "We wanted to get the feeling of climbing higher and higher into the light but with this sort of melancholy," asserts JB. Who would disagree?

If this is the racket that Air make unbounded by outside influences, secreted away in their exclusive Parisian studio lair, then we can't wait to hear further dispatches from Air central. "We've moved all of our stuff into Atlas [their studio] so now we can make the sound that we really want to make," enthuses JB. "It's like our starship and we are the captains of the starship and we can take it wherever we want to." Permission to take off.

Free Single, 'Do The Joy', released 6th July
Single, 'Sing Sang Sung', released 24th August
Album, 'Love 2', released 5th October

www.aircheology.com
www.myspace.com/intairnet

TRACK BY TRACK NOTES

HEAVEN'S LIGHT

N: It's JB on vocals and this song is very classic. It's all about keyboards and this has got the real classic Air chords. It has a John Barry feeling.

JB: We wanted to get the feeling of climbing higher and higher into the light but with this sort of melancholy. It's also very romantic and a celebration of women like all Air songs. We always see women in a romantic, idealised way.

SING SANG SUNG

N: The words are a joke about English grammar and again the vocal is by JB.

JB: The vibration of the song is that everything is fine. Just let your work speak.

SO LIGHT IS HER FOOTFALL

N: It was inspired by Oscar Wilde and fog and Jack The Ripper. Very romantic! Our romantic vision of England.

JB: I think the title is originally from Oscar Wilde and it was about ghosts in a castle. We built the song from the title.

NIGHT HUNTER

N: This was just a jam, but we wanted to put a different melody on top of it because otherwise it would just sound like a pastiche. So it has an Eastern melody with this Afrobeat feeling underneath. It's a meeting of culture.

JB: It's a like a little bit of a melting pot with a bit of Caribbean culture in there. There are tigers and lions in there, too, stalking the song.

EAT MY BEAT

N: It's like a cop show. This was another one of our jams. I buy a lot of keyboards and I think I really make sure that I use them properly - because so many don't now - so they sound unique.

JB: Everything is in a rush. The guitars, in particular, seem to be in a rush and we can't stop them.

DO THE JOY

N: It's our ecology song. It's about the imminent end of the planet so let's enjoy ourselves before it all goes.

JB: Our lives right now are in danger from work, from life, from everything. And it's important to be happy now because tomorrow you don't know what will happen. Because we have to enjoy life right now because the end of the world might be tomorrow.

LOVE

JB: We are very interested in love. We try to show all aspects of love. We try to show how important love is in this technological world.

AFRICAN VELVET

N: It's an old riff on the guitar we'd never got round to recording. I wanted it to be a little bit 'rock'.

JB: It's the softness of velvet. Anything can be like velvet. It's beautiful.

MISSING THE LIGHT OF THE DAY

N: This is unexpected and really cool. We wanted to get these really interesting synth sounds in there and again it has JB on vocals.

JB: We miss the light of the day, especially in winter. It affects your mind. Or you might miss the light of the day in nightclubs!

BE A BEE

N: This is a tune that we'd been playing at soundchecks for a while. I love it and I love the sound of it: Be A Bee!

JB: It's a crazy instrumental but in a good way. The lyrics don't make any sense but the music is a freakout.

YOU CAN TELL

N: Each time we make an album, we normally have all this slow music and we have to find something uptempo to add to it, but this time we needed some slower songs on there and this is one of them.

JB: It's a kind of love song. A hidden love. A lot of love sensations are obscured by things around you. Sometimes it has to be hidden to be shown.

TROPICAL DISEASE

N: It's our vision of Brazil. The late 60s psychedelia in Brazil like Tropicalia but also it's got these jazzy influences like Alice Coltrane in there.

JB: It reminds me of Rio de Janeiro. I've never been there, but it reminds me of what I imagine it to be. I have a vision of being in a plane and arriving in Rio de Janeiro. I don't know why. The song is like a trip.

www.aircheology.com

