



& THE NAKED FAMOUS

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*It'll be difficult to peg a genre around The Naked and Famous' new album coming out in October 2016. The New Zealand-born, So-Cal-based band is known for their hypnotic visuals and dreamlike yet energetic melodies, creating a sound so original it's hard to summarize in just one or two words. Even if their genre remains elusive, one thing's about The Naked and Famous: when **Simple Forms** is released, it'll be anything but simple.*

"I still have trouble with pigeonholing our band into a genre. For the sake of having to label things so people don't get confused, we just say we're an alternative pop band," says lead singer Alisa Xanalith. "We start with an idea and run with it. You can always expect dreamy synths, punchy drum fills and rock guitars in a Naked and Famous song."

Those expectations were met when the single from the new album *Higher* was released in early July. The song, like many Naked and Famous Numbers, hits listeners like a Vodka Red Bull, quickly putting you at ease while commanding your upright attention. Xanalith says the band set out to make a pop record with *Simple Forms*, amplifying the bright pop elements from their first two albums *Passive Me*, *Aggressive You* and *In Rolling Waves*. "Full of peaks and valleys, that's The Naked and Famous way!" Xanalith said.

Throughout those albums, the group has been constantly evolving and maturing, and is excited for their new album to hit the world.

"*Passive Me*, *Aggressive You* was written in 2009 when we were in our very early twenties. We were just kids. We didn't release 'In Rolling Waves' until 2013. So the graduation of growing as people in the world affected how we grew as people making music in a band," Xanalith said. "It's been 3 years since we have released anything new and it feels good to be sitting on the edge of releasing *Simple Forms*."

That journey to *Simple Forms* has been an unusual one. Xanalith, Thom Powers (guitarist/vocals) and Aaron Short (keyboards) met at music school in 2006 and quickly bonded over their shared love of 90's rock and pop music. David Beadle (bass) and Jesse Wood (drums) were friends of Thom and Aaron, and before long the band was in place, backed by a sturdy self-assuredness of knowing exactly what they wanted their sound to be. They quickly found success in New Zealand before packing their bags and hopping across the globe to Los Angeles in 2011.

"It really was a brand new start in every way," Xanalith explains. "We were immigrants starting over in a new country, open to opportunity and armed with a great desire to build something great. The band considers L.A. home, we love it here."

Despite that L.A. love, the band's music hasn't necessarily been influenced by the glistening beaches or sweeping Malibu sunsets. Southern California has served more as an opportunity for The Naked and Famous to play shows and build an audience, while honing their craft among the immensely competitive LA music landscape.

"I'm yet to write a song that is directly influenced by my physical environment," Xanalith said. "Even then, it would be a very limited source of inspiration because often I'm stuck inside a room with no windows and wearing a cardigan because air conditioning is blasting on full while I know the sun is shining outside."

But Los Angeles is where Xanalith felt that moment where the group had "made it."

"I think my moment where I felt like I had a 'yes we made it' moment was hearing 'Young Blood' play on the radio for the first time driving around Laurel Canyon where we were all living at the time. Or hearing it as I would walk into a shop or restaurant. That for me is surreal. I'm living in a foreign country where my song gets played on the radio."

Collaboration has been a key part to the band's success, where members injects their own unique creative contribution outside of playing their own instrument. And the group's longtime relationship with Joel Kefali and Campbell Hooper gave The Naked and Famous a bold visual aesthetic that can be seen in both their music videos and live performances.

"Usually an idea would start with a demo Thom would be writing on his laptop and I would step in and collaborate. Or I would bring him an idea and we would produce and build on it, Xanalith said. "Songs generally bounce back and forth between the two of us in a Dropbox. Aaron has always had a penchant for finessing synths and drums, he's always had a keen ear on sound design, and from there ideas get fleshed out further in a rehearsal room with the rhythm section."

"The creative process is driven by a strong song no matter who it comes from and we help each other fill in the gaps. That's the great thing about being in a band, you have more than one person to bounce an idea off or help realize an idea. You know there's always someone that is going to get you out of a funk if you feel like you have a creative block."

Xanalith personally has been inspired by strong female musicians artists like Bjork, Fiona Apple, Georgia O'Keefe, as well as her strong relationships with her older sister and godmother, who raised Xanalith after her mom passed away at a young age. Aside from creative collaboration, Xanalith stresses the importance of hard work and discipline to succeeding as a musician.

"Never stop writing music and practicing your instrument," she said. "That advice may be simple, but it's easier said than done. Discipline is so important. I pretty much don't have a social life in order to create music and some of the best songs have been written by just doing that."

The new album comes out in October and the band will be hitting the road for a U.S. tour starting Sep. 21. The competitive process has been far from simple to getting the band to where they are today, but they're grateful for the fans who've been listening throughout their journey.

"I think the fact that people have been so supportive and have stuck by us through all these years is such a gift," Xanalith said. "I can only hope for the best and cross my fingers that the music is received with love and pure enjoyment."