

Moby Rich expands their world view and has some fun in between

By **Murjani Rawls** - Jul 10, 2019



Photo by Jack Dytrych

I'll have to admit before I begin this piece that speaking with Los Angeles-based alternative pop duo Moby Rich (Maxwell Joseph and Connor Pledger) was very fun and seamless, just like talking to friends that you haven't seen in a while. You say your hellos, you catch up a bit, and the next thing you know, you go into deep dives about where you are now. Their music is just as inviting to where there's both a carefree attitude and some serious life discussions peppered in. You get the best of both worlds.

Moby Rich's second EP, aptly named *Our First Second EP*, is a collection of songs that are products of collaboration for the first time and talks that both friends had over the course of some time. It's an expansion of sound and source material that will be sure to invite new fans while intriguing the older ones. We talked about the inspiration behind the new EP as well as revisiting older songs, and how it was to expand the horizons of Moby Rich.

How was the recording process from your first EP to this one that is on the horizon? You mention that you had some of these songs waiting for a while.

Maxwell: Relatively the same. The one song that was probably the most different was 'Sabotage,' which we wrote with Sam De Jong. That was the first song that we released that wasn't a song that Connor and I had written. We wrote that at Sam's space in a studio, so the process was a little bit different initially where we would take an already started track to somebody to finish up. We're just always looking to grow, find new ways, and experiment. We just try to push ourselves.

Connor: Yeah, this song like a couple of other songs that we released are still a part of the iPhone 5 vocal recordings. There's still a little bit of that on the vocals for the stuff that we are releasing. There's even still a little bit of that lo-fi guaranteed weirdness of this EP. Sometimes, I think it's good to be limited by the stuff you know how to do. Sometimes it forces you to be a bit more creative in the writing process. We are definitely limited in the things that we know (haha), but we're trying to get better.

We're learning more. We get to work with some amazing producers now and feel very fortunate and lucky to be in a room with them. People like Sam. Definitely excited to make more.

You just mentioned the iPhone 5 lo-fi recording. I look at these EPs as evolutions of Moby Rich. A journey as you both learn and grow. When you go back and revisit those older recordings, you hear all these emotions in that current time frame. Meanwhile, you're making this new body of work. How does it feel going back down memory lane?

Maxwell: It's pretty crazy. The timeline of when we wrote some of the songs and release them are not always the same. We put out "Yoko Ono" first, but we wrote that after a couple of the songs. A couple of the songs that we are on the newest EP, they were like the third and fourth songs we wrote for the project. We wrote a lot of songs after that have come out before these songs. So, it's

weird in a sense of looking back and thinking about how much time we spent on the project. It's pretty surreal to think that we've been writing and been friends for now four and a half years.

Connor: Yeah, I add a fun little thing. We have a secret Soundcloud of every song we've ever recorded. We'll go on there and you can listen to everything from the beginning. There absolutely is a sonic difference as you go through. At one point, we were creating some tracks. Our managers came in and were like "ahh, these tracks are getting better." I asked Maxwell, "are they really getting better or are we writing so many.." I just couldn't even understand. I didn't believe it until I went back and listened. Then I was like, WOW! It is getting better.

It's definitely cool to have a time capsule that we can go back and listen to where we were in our lives.

Maxwell: Unless the internet goes down. Then we lose it all.

Connor: We'll at least have our set.

Did you guys write these songs on acoustic guitar like you did with previous songs?

Maxwell: It kind of changes. Now that we've been working with other people, you never know what's going to happen. You leave the process open to whatever feels right. When Connor and I write by ourselves, the majority of the time is just on acoustic. I mean, as we said before if this song can stand along on acoustic, then it's probably a good song as a base foundation. From there, you can just build an awesome track around that.

Connor: We're changing the way that we write now, but we definitely both prefer to start with acoustic. Honestly, it's just nice to not have to worry about all the other things yet. Then you get into these studios with a thousand toys on the wall. The next thing you know, you're plugging plugs into some crazy synthesizer from the 60's and making the weirdest sounds. It's amazing and you can't beat that either. We are definitely open to all ways of writing. When left to our own devices, we tend to start on acoustic.

We don't have a bunch of toys yet. Once we become the biggest band in our apartment complex, we'll go for it. We live in LA. There's a lot of competition. We're the mom and pop band that started

a couple doors down.

You mentioned “Sabotage” and it was the first song you both co-wrote with someone. Just narrowing it to this EP, how was adding another personality or ingredient like to the writing process?

Maxwell: For us, the most important thing working with anybody is that they add to the project.

Connor: And that they understand.

Maxwell: We always make the analogy that we’re such big plants metaphorically that we just need somebody to water us. We don’t need another plant in the room. What was so cool about working with Sam was that he had a great understanding of what we were trying to do and who we are. When we wrote “Sabotage,” it just came out naturally.

Connor: We had good conversations with Sam, too. It was so easy to talk to him and we’re buddies with him now. While we were writing, for us at least. Maxwell and I like to steer the ship. Sam was very good at feeding us inspiration as we were going. We would hit a wall and then he would be like “what about this?” That would stem another idea. When we do a co-write with a producer, we usually want to be in a room with somebody who is more fodder than water.

The song lyrics themselves touch on this inner struggle. From a macro point of view, it’s speaking about our generation that constantly goes through obstacles. This theme reoccurs throughout the four tracks. Can you go into the meaning of “Sabotage?” It speaks how outside things can make you overthink and doubt yourself a little.

Maxwell: For us, this project and this band, the whole reason it’s worked so well is because Connor and I are constantly talking about our own personal lives. We’re best friends and we live together, so we constantly get into conversations about what we’re going through. Over the course of our friendship, we realized on a personal level that we are constantly messing things up for ourselves. We’re constantly shooting ourselves in our own foot.

Connor: Like you said, on the macro level, you can also see about society that we want to make this a better world for ourselves. However, why are we doing these things that are fucking ourselves up?

Why are we polluting our planet? Why aren't we taking the steps to actually fix things?

Maxwell: I think there's a certain amount of apathy that you run into in our generation because there are so many things to care about and fix. It's easy to fall into that mindset of "oh, I don't even want to think about it." The little things that you do in your personal life are a reflection of a bigger thing.

Connor: We have a lot of friends. A bunch of musician buddies that are a lot more political than we are. We want to be more like them. We love them for that. We ended up writing songs that are a little more satirical that make fun of ourselves for being the type of people that can't make a fucking decision. Can't do the things that we know that we should be doing. Honestly, I think people see themselves in that. They're like "oh shit! I guess I could be doing something more."

That's the band that we are. We aren't the band that's going to change the world just yet, but maybe if we can let people know that they aren't the only ones that don't feel like they can't do anything, then maybe we can do something together.

There's a couple of witty lyrics in "Oil Spill." *You can buy a gold coffin/You can marry quite as often/As you like/If this price is right.* You spoke briefly about being satirical. I feel like this a little commentary driven when I listen to it.

Maxwell: When we wrote that song, we were getting into the vibe and talking about in this world that we live. And how it's possible to see the corruption and how money can paint a lot of things. I don't think it's good to dwell and live in that always.

Connor: Essentially, "Oil Spill" is about how when we grow up, we are told and shown the ways that we are "supposed to live." You need to graduate. You have to go to college. You have to get married. You have to save, save, save so can get the big house, the big yard, and white picket fence. That's the deal. That's the American dream. We buy that shit up and tell our kids that it's the only thing that we can do. So, when they do finally get married, they're unhappy. They can't afford the house that they live in because they think they needed the big one.

You can see quickly how we go from this amazing, free country that has this abilities to make all these decisions for ourselves. However, we get stuck in this society that we all feel pressure to be a

specific person. Even though we have the complete free will to do whatever we want, but we keep choosing this path that has already been laid out for us.

“Oil Spill” is very satirical. It’s making fun of the fact that we buy right into that shit. We eat it up and we drink the oil. The next thing you know, we’re all sick.

It goes into “Currents” as well. It’s a perfect sequencing. Realizing the things you just said and trying to fight to swim upstream for a life that you want. These songs are brother and sister.

Maxwell: Yea, if you look into all the songs on this EP, they have this theme of, “listen, don’t buy what this is telling you. Do what you wanna do.” Yea, you might fuck up sometimes. You might shoot yourself in the foot. Everybody does. Just go and try to make yourself happy. You have to define some sort of meaning in this world.

We, on a personal level, is trying to find out what things mean to us. Whether it be this band, our music, our lives, etc. The ability to paint that picture to our fans and those people that we are trying to build a community with, that’s what is important to us. Naturally, we find our voice and then we go through the process of honing it in a little bit more. Honestly, until you said that, I didn’t even realize the EP had that flow, haha.

With your first EP and “Yoko Ono,” a lot of it deals with love and those experiences. The second EP deals with a lot of societal factors and a battle with self. When you both made these songs and had these talks, was it a conscious decision to put them together this way or was it a natural stream of consciousness?

Maxwell: To be completely honest, we grouped these songs based on “oh man, this would sound really good going from one to the other.”

Connor: And maybe it was partly because of that. It wasn’t so much like “oh, these have to be together.” It was more so the feeling. Like these feel right together.

Maxwell: I think also that these were four songs that we really wanted to put out. I think that these just beat out other songs at the time. Maybe it was because they had a cohesiveness.

Connor: I think as more songs come out, you'll realize that..I think people are starting to see that all these songs that are being released go together in a way.

Maxwell: I think, going forward, we hopefully don't want to be a band that is cornering ourselves. I think we constantly are going to be moving in and out talking about love and the world in front of us.

Connor: We just wanna talk about life. All aspects of it. Where it makes sense and where it doesn't make sense.

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Journalist, Self-published author of five books, and photographer since 2014, Murjani "MJ" Rawls has been stretching his capabilities of his creativity and passions, Rawls has as a portfolio spanning through many mediums including music, television, movies, and more. Operating out of the New York area, Rawls has photographed over 200+ artists spanning many genres, written over 600 articles ranging displaying his passionate aspirations to keep evolving as his years in media continue.

