

NEW MUSIC

Telling tales

Why spoil an incredible guitar riff with some unnecessary vocals? Young Liar are getting along nicely without lyrics as Ian McCabe discovers

A good song needs great lyrics, at least according to a musician friend of mine. An internet search for the best songwriters of the last century usually produces Bob Dylan along with John Lennon and Paul McCartney, with much onus placed upon their lyrics.

Newcastle five-piece, Young Liar have spent the past two years proving this theory wrong, producing guitar-driven rock opuses which band manager and bassist, Bob Allan describes as 'noise with beats.'

The lack of words to sing along to hasn't deterred audiences in the slightest, with thousands of followers from all across the world. "I've never tried to write lyrics," guitarist Joel Thompson explains. "I'm not particularly interested in doing so. Vocals are only one element of music. We get asked all the time why we don't have vocals but no one has ever asked us why we don't have a saxophone!"

There are advantages and disadvantages to creating rock music without lyrics, says Bob, 28, but on the whole the process is similar. "I think it takes away the time and effort spent on nailing a vocal. But it also forces you to keep the music interesting and the melody is found in the instruments, so it's no different really, you just don't get people singing along."

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Young Liar started life as Joel's multi-instrumental solo project, before he decided to take the next step and put a band together. "I started promoting gigs in Newcastle and worked with the bands that Bob and Metty (Andrew Metcalf) used to be in a number of times," explains Joel, 25. "When I finally decided to get a band together they were at the top of my list. Luckily they all said 'aye!' when I asked them to play one gig."

That one gig was a charity event organised by Mick Ross of Frankie and the Heartstrings, originally intended as a one-time thing. "We had only practiced twice and were playing the first four songs that I'd ever written. We were nowhere near what you would call 'tight' but we still wanted to make an impact, which we did by being the loudest band of the weekend. We really enjoyed that gig and before long were offered a few more.

"That four-song set ended up becoming Young Liar EP1 and things just grew from there," he adds. "It's all happened at a natural pace really. We've never had any sort of long-term plan. We just like making music together and each other's company, most of the time."

Young Liar have since played across the



nation, including support slots with The Futureheads and a spot on last year's Sunderland Split Festival and Live at Leeds. Their two EPs and live performances have received props from BBC 6 Music's Gideon Coe and Drowned in Sound and their Facebook page likes are currently into the thousands, making Young Liar one of the most popular North East acts of the moment.

They've drawn comparison to 'post-rock' bands such as Mogwai and Explosions in the Sky, something Joel understands but doesn't necessarily agree with. "We've never tried to be a post-rock band," he says. "Personally, I don't think I've got the patience to write post-rock music, too much waiting around until the noisy bit. I think the Krautrock comparisons we have had, to bands like Neu! make more sense, as nearly every song I write starts with a rhythm and then a bass line. The guitars all come

afterwards.

"I like to just experiment and try things I've not done before until my ears agree with what it sounds like. Why my ears agree with certain vibrations of air going into them and not others, I'm not entirely sure."

Joel, Bob, Metty, Alan McDonald and Chris McGreevy meet once a week for practice at the Off Quay building in Ouseburn and then move to one of the locals pubs to discuss their often bizarre song titles, such as A Fist in the Face of God. And whilst many acts vie to be as tight and primed as possible, Joel believes a little rawness can go a long way too. It may even be the secret to their success.

"We've never been the type of band who practices for months and months and months before playing a gig. If anything, I think that being slightly under-rehearsed is much more fun," he says. "It keeps you on your toes and



makes playing live much more interesting. Also, it gives you a chance to be a bit spontaneous and take your tops off every now and again."

September's Split Festival in Sunderland is next on the horizon for the lads and Manchester electronic duo, Ghost Season are remixing Stay Hungry, Stay Crazy from the band's 2nd EP, expected for release shortly. They also hope to release their debut LP in the autumn. So, what can we expect?

"We actually have a few songs with vocals on that Alan has written and will be singing with a ridiculous amount of reverb and delay on," says Joel. "We're keen for our sound to develop naturally and don't really have an idea of a 'finished sound' in mind. We're all listening to new music and getting new ideas all the time so I wouldn't rule anything out."

Newcastle five-piece Young Liar

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