

NEW MUSIC

It's a Wonderful, but messy, Life

They're called O'Messy Life, but this band have far from bungled their music career, as Ian McCabe writes.



TOM Bagnell, bass player from Newcastle's O'Messy Life, jokes: "We should say in our biography: our band is better than your band because one of us has been on Eggheads", referring to his recent appearance on the BBC quiz show.

"You lost, though," chirps in front man David Littlefair. "So that's not really a positive thing, is it?"

"Maybe next time we should enter as a band then," retorts Tom.

The prospect of O'Messy Life facing off against the resident Eggheads can only bring a smile to your face. Full of character and playful exuberance, this charmingly idiosyncratic five-piece aren't short of intelligence and wit.

It's a frosty Sunday afternoon and we meet at one of the most popular playgrounds for local musicians, The Cluny in Byker.

Tom and David, along with band members Adam Schofield, Alex Hall and Matt Weaver, have gradually built a cult following within the North East. They formed in 2008 from the ashes of other local acts such as Shin Jin Rui and A Woman of no Importance. The band then spent a number of years gradually chipping away and experimenting in order to find a sound and line

up that they were comfortable with.

Inspired by groups such as The Pixies, Wilco and The Weakerthans, they eventually settled on the pop-rock sound that defines them and soon found themselves touring the country, playing alongside established acts such as The Vaccines and Frankie and The Heartstrings.

"We're staying practical at the moment and I'd say we're quite ambitious. But, rather than have aspirations about what you want to be, I think it helps to identify what you don't want to be," jokes David. "I think it helps to define yourself much like binary code. Say, Dire Straits bad, us good. Ideally I just want to be a million miles away from Mark Knopler, and right now I guess I am."

As it turns out, whether they like it or not, that gap is beginning to get slightly smaller. Their grungy guitars and catchy hooks have seen them championed by the likes of Drowned in Sound and BBC Radio 6's Tom Robinson, who stated: "Lead singer David Littlefair's voice teeters on the brink between genius and insanity."

David, 25, says: "I really like 50s ballads, with really soapy, cheesy piano playing. I liken our sound to those ballads, but with doom guitars

and massive riffs. That's our MO."

They also caught the attention of Andrew WK after a recent Stars in Their Eyes-type show in which they portrayed the American party rocker. "That show was loads of fun," explains David. "I'm not really an extroverted bloke who gets to go into the audience and incite a mosh. But I did that day and it felt really good."

Their three EP releases, Worry Party, Green Posies Growin', Gangrene Below 'Em, and O'Messy Life and The Quarter Life Crisis of Conan, takes their fun, poppy guitar sounds and juxtaposes them with varying dark themes, such as Suicide Cults and 'oppressive' political parties to NASA and failed space exploration.

"I like to write about these things, although it's mostly metaphorical," says David, adding: "I think the idea of being in a suicide cult is really appealing under a Conservative government. It's a means of escape. Though really I guess it's about having a sense of disappointment and finding a means to get away from it."

Recently, the band signed to Gateshead-based label Tiny Lights Recordings, owned by Paul Brown and the home of such local artists as The Lake Poets and Fantasy Rainbow. Via the label they released the well received single Escape



Velocity.

"We released the EPs ourselves, but we felt that with the single it was a good time to let someone else take care of the financial burden, so to speak," explains Tom, 31. "Paul has a very good ethos and he lets us put things out the way we want to. He really wants to help out and be involved with promoting local talent."

"And there's a lot of it [in the region] too, like Woolly Mammoth and Baskin's Wish."

"It's also quite close knit. There are a lot of people here who you can approach and if they can't help you with something they'll put you in touch with someone who can."

O'Messy Life are working on a new single and EP for spring.

O'Messy Life play The Cluny 2 on February 11 alongside Piskie Sits and Acrobatic Society. Visit www.facebook.com/omessylife

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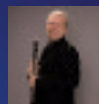
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