IN CONVERSATION WITH:

Y U QT

Tightly knit by a childhood bond and a shared love for music, Cooper and Darryl, the dynamic forces behind Y U QT, emerged as a duo in 2019. Mirroring the serendipity of their musical reunion after years apart, their cosmic-inspired name positions them as rising stars that have been reshaping the landscape of the UK club scene. Although guided by the influential hand of garage DJ Riz La Teef, their musical style isn't confined to just garage. It's a blend of ambient pads, basslines, and rhythms from around the world, including melodies they borrow from everyday life.

Since their first single, the pair has explored new sonic territories and delivered electrifying DJ sets across the nation,just earlier this year, the duo was met with one of their most exhilarating career highs, sparked by the track "Y'all Ready For Dis" going viral during Yung Singh's Boiler Room set in Melbourne. Gearing up for another exciting year with new announcements on the horizon, we catch up with the pair to see just how they came into their success.

Calling in from their respective homes, the pair embody the infectious energy and laughter that fuels the production of their vibrant club sounds as soon as the call starts.

George: Hey guys, how have you both been?

Darryl: The last few weeks have been good, we've been getting along (laugha).

Cooper: Yeah, as always (laugha).

Darryl: We've been busy playing some shows, they've been really good. We played in Bath, Leeds, and Manchester one show after the other. It's cool doing shows like that because it's basically like training, without thinking about it. By the third day of doing a different shoot, with different models and everything, you're like, I think I can handle anything.

George: Although you're relatively infant in your quasi-commercial careers, I'm intrigued to know how it really started for you guys. What was the thing that lit the match?

Darryl: I was talking about this with someone at dinner the other night, and it just hit me that everything fell into place by accident. We've been friends since childhood but had never ventured into making music together. Then the first track we created happened to be this garage-style track, and the next one after was 'U Belong to Me', and we didn't even have a name then.

Cooper: We didn't have any real intention to do anything with the track. It was just... we were having fun hanging out and making tunes together.

Darryl: Yeah. And then they Coop sent it off to Riz La Teef, and that's literally how everything started. He was like "Right, I'm gonna put this out. I'm starting a label to put this out, think of a name".

Cooper: Yeah, there was a 6 week window from when he got the record to come up with a name. So, we started from there.

George: You guys were forced to come up with your name on a time limit?

Both: Yeah.

George: What was the process of that? What was the A to B or I guess the Y to T?

Both: (laugh).

Darryl: I mean, because we've been friends for so long, there's loads of things that are meaningful to us. So, we just had constant massive lists of different random things from childhood times to recent times to like literally, at one point I think the name was going to be Miss Gran or something.

George: From a teacher?

Darryl: Yeah from year 7 (laugha). There was a skate park in our town called the Boardroom and at one point it was gonna be called the Old Boardroom. But Y U QT actually means nothing. One day I was looking up stuff to do with stars and the only reason I was doing that by the way Coop, which I don't think you know, was because of your interest in stars.

Cooper: Aw (laugha).

Darryl: So, the biggest star in the solar system is called U Y Scuti. I think it might actually be a supersun. But then I asked Cooper, "What about this?" And he just said "Sounds a bit weird, what about why Y U QT?", which literally meant nothing. And I was like "Yup".

Cooper: It's got a nice little ring to it (laugha).

George: Sometimes you just know, I think. Don't you?

Darryl: And it wasn't awkward either. Because I've had it before where you come up with a name and someone asks you like... (pauses). Are you at your mum's Coop?

Cooper: Yeah.

Darryl: Sometimes people ask you, "What's the name?" and you feel a bit weird about saying it, but we didn't because it doesn't mean anything. So, it's not like we're called "Deep Emotions" (laugha).

Cooper: Yeah, there's no connotations that go with it. When you say it, someone doesn't think of anything because it isn't anything.

George: When I met you guys, one thing I sensed was the authenticity in your actions. There seemed to be no need to question anything because you navigate in a way that is honest and true to yourselves. Do you feel like there has always been a natural synergy between you two? That you were sort of destined to make stuff with each other, even if you were just doing your own thing?

Darryl: Well, as soon as we started making music, everything happened really fast. One thing that's good is that it's not too fast where it's like one song and done. My favourite musical memory was when we were kids and Coop had a laptop basically before anybody did. And so I used to just use the laptop all night at his house.

Cooper: And even before that was the PCs which had Acid Pro and stuff like that. It was great to have the tools as kids to be able to experiment with music freely. Darryl also played in a band with my brother, so there was just music all around all the time.

Darryl: And all of that happened in the room up there (points). Above where Coop is sat.

George: I think that's a testament for how I describe you guys as abnormally normal.

Both: (laugh).

George: But in the best way possible. There's nothing fancy or grandiose about the way you act, but there is something special about what you make. Do you think that your music has always represented you or has your outlook on music changed since then?

Coop: When we were really young we had loads in common in terms of what we listened to. We both really loved hip-hop. We'd love to share music with each other when we were kids. I'd get on the bus and then as soon as Darryl would get on the bus, I'd be like, "Listen to this" and we were always showing each other what music we were into. When we got a bit older and I got into house, Darryl wasn't in at all. We kind of went our own separate ways a little bit with music at some point. But to bring it back around and to get to make what we make together now is just great, it's so much fun.

Darryl: And also, back when I was in a band, he guitar led the music I was making, that was quite emotional. And then the stuff that Coop was making previously was quite ambient and dramatic.

Coop: Yeah, emo shit.

Darryl: But when we make music together as Y U QT, all we ever do together is have a good time. And that reflects in what we make because it is good time music you know? And I don't ever want to sort of lose that element of it. I feel like what happens when we come together is completely by accident. If we're at a club performing, we're both really energetic as DJs. So I don't want to make an un-energetic song, because both of us are really bad at taking it as well (laugha).

Cooper: Yeah (laugha).

George: It seems like even as you reflect, the word accidental keeps appearing. I think that could be replaced pretty easily with natural.

Cooper: Yeah, that's what I was gonna say. Because we've been friends so long, we know how the other thinks really well. There's not too much thinking that has to go on because we're just so comfortable around each other. It definitely feels natural. When we're together and making music, it's completely normal.

Darryl: I really want to do a shoot where we're supposed to do things as if we're one person, but the other person's there. Like, Coops at a restaurant with his girlfriend and I'm sitting at the same table at the side leaning over going like "Oh, did you..."

Cooper: Like "Did you finish that?" (laugha).

Darryl: Or showing him something on my phone like "Have you seen this?"

George: (Laugha). It's been sort of a climactic moment this year seeing you both perform all over the place. Have you guys started to think differently in terms of the story you want to tell about yourselves or get across with the music?

Darryl: I think in the future, there's an idea to go down different routes with our performance. But at the moment, we're having a really good time playing shows. Our next single after this EP is called "How You Feeling in the Party" (laugha). So we don't want to go flatting away from that emotion too much. Another thing is how much we give our music away. Anybody that messages us saying "Oh man, I'd be so happy if you gave me blah blah blah", I'll just immediately send it to them back and they're like "What?!". And it's just like, yeah, you asked, you can have it (laugha).

George: The characters on the rings you guys wear are also on other imagery of yours, what's the backstory of that image?

Cooper: We experimented a lot with different drawings because we wanted to make the letters Y U QT look nice and aesthetic on the ring. We started sort of referencing old cartoons a little bit, but then it was all that sort of time is now coming out that was mostly like that kind of thing. And we didn't want to just look like a knockoff of something that already existed. And then we eventually asked my mate, Ben, if he'd mock up some designs for us, and there were like five or six designs and then that one just really stood out to us.

Darryl: Yeah, it didn't have the circle around it, it just had the girls in the corner. Well I think they're girls.

Cooper: (laugha).

Darryl: I remember when we got them and there was one design made that had a circle around it. Coop was like "Well, we could use that one and this one and that one and" and I was like "No let's never use anything else but that one design". It's almost like the Nike Swoosh of the brand. 'Cause now you can just put that logo and without any pictures of us, you know it's Y U QT. Which really helped because at the start we weren't sure if that showed enough of us. And then I just looked at us both in the mirror one day and said my God, the world needs to see this.

Cooper: (laugha).

George: There is a sense of mystery with many artists in the dance scene, but one thing that can be appreciated with you guys is you're open with how you approach things. When you're travelling around and performing and getting into the party mode of things, how do you know when you need to pare it back versus go even harder?

Cooper: I don't think we ever choose to hold anything back. It's just about having fun. I think the main thing for us is to never get so serious to the point that you're not having fun anymore. Because as soon as you're not having fun, what's the point? So yeah, just doing everything to get maximum enjoyment out of it. We enjoy travelling around together and DJing together. So if we can do it more and bigger then of course we'll go more and bigger.

George: Where is bigger for you guys? What's the star moment you envision?

Cooper: Since I was little, I've dreamed of playing Glastonbury. That seems like such a smaller dream now in a weird way. We've still not done it but it feels as if there's probably way bigger things now that we're older. Just getting to travel to Australia is a big one. Well for me personally, I know Darryl's been before in the past, but I would love to get out there to perform and be there for music. Just getting to travel but doing it around music.

Darryl: It's weird because you could go to Australia and be put on all the right lineups with all the right DJs with really good promoters and companies all involved, but at the end of it it's actually not your thing. When we were touring for All Nyte Long, it was really cool because it was just like a proper defining thing for us as musicians. People were coming in to see Y U QT the whole night. There's a venue in Amsterdam called the Melkweg. It's not massive or anything but it's just a legendary space. I'd be cool if we put on our own night there. We're playing that soon on a lineup with other people, which is great. I'm not putting that down. I'm just saying, you really feel it when you go in and it's just your name.

Cooper: And those little nights are really good because it means we get six hours to run through our sound. Most people pin our sound into garage, which is probably our underlying genre, but what we listen to and what we like is so much broader than that. It's great to be able to do shows where you're given the time to run through that spectrum of music and not try and cram that all into just an hour.

Darryl: It also depends on the venue, cause you might get there and the person before has just played Noisia.

George: You pay homage across multiple genres and you guys have had a start as bootlegs and then evolved into something quite massive after nearly every single time. What does that process look like?

Cooper: Yeah, I think the process is continuously listening to different things, even if that means going back to dig things you've never heard before. Late Night is when garage first popped off, we probably would have been like eight, nine years old and stuff. So we weren't out at the raves or anything, but it was creeping onto the radio and that's where we would hear it. It was an interesting sound to us, and back then it was also the early days of the internet where you could get things off Limewire. We pretty much were downloading music never-endingly. We just loved music. That was the main research.

Darryl: We definitely both listen to music in different ways as well. Coop sits and listens to music taking his time, I'll sit and listen for a second and then all of a sudden it's blown up into something.

George: Is there an example of that happening? And a track coming from it?

Darryl: Yeah, there are loads of examples on the new EP. There's a track on it called 'Tiempo'. Coop showed me a SoundCloud playlist that had about 200 songs on it. I listened to the first two seconds of the first song and from that came 'Tiempo'.

Cooper: It had a mad Brazilian bass, like Baile Funk stuff. The real modern new stuff, which was just absolutely crackers. But it was such a world away from us. It is interesting listening to music from the other side of the world and taking influence from that and infusing it into our own sound. That is really fun.

George: Were you guys ever clinically trained beforehand or are you completely self-taught?

Cooper: We went to music college together for a bit. But I don't know how much we learned (laugha). We learned a fair bit, but Darryl's self taught. His older brother taught him a lot about drums.

Darryl: Yeah. Musically I play the guitar and the drums. Since I've been 14, my brother has been in a band called The World. I'm familiar with that side of music. I was in a band for a long time where I played and I still play drums with my brother's band. Do you know Premier Drums? I'm one of the official drummers. I'm not gonna lie, the way that we make music now, even if this stuff sort of sounds similar, that all sort of comes after the fact of just throwing everything at a song. So a little bit of a sample or some drums.

George: What are some of your favourite moments when you're making music?

Cooper: I think watching an original idea expand into something much greater is the exciting part. Sometimes tracks come together really quick and then sometimes they go absolutely nowhere. And you're like, "Should we just leave that there for the day?" And then obviously the ones that come together quickly are a lot more fun because you feel a stronger sense of achievement.

Darryl: But I basically can't leave anything. We'll make stuff together on a Monday and then I sort of do more throughout the week that night. Yeah, I just can't Let It Go, no pun intended.

Cooper: (Laugha).

George: Bit of promo.

Darryl: Yeah 'Let it Go', out now. But, we've got a big sample library of nonsense. It's not records, it's just what's on our harddrive or random clips. I was on the train the other day – this story actually sounds fake – but a lady came by and asked "Would you like any juice or Flapjack?" The melody that she said it in was so good that I recorded that and knew we'd make a techno beat out of that because the melody was so good. (Hums the melody). And that's actually a technique that someone taught me. If you're ever struggling for melodies, watch a TED talk, or basically just watch anybody say anything and catch that melody and you could loop that.

The track I mentioned earlier, 'Tiempo', the vocal for it is a Spanish weather reporter. I think what she's actually saying on it is "It's a mild 10 degrees today" but the melody or the pattern she was speaking in was so sick. It goes like (hums the melody). It was sick.

George: Throughout this whole call, you've both had very different energies. Darryl, you've been moving around and Coop you've been static. I love that.

Coop: Yeah, my mum's just brought me a cup of tea.

George: Does that help you guys when you're making a track, is there a synergy within that difference between you both?

Coop: Yeah, I'd like to think so.

Darryl: Yeah, if someone's got an idea and they need to put it into words, they turn to me because in a way, it's easier to ask me than to do it themselves. And that's not just with Coop, but in any collaborative situation. In my writing situations with people, I'm the one who ends up spitting out words to bring the ideas to life.

It works well with Coop's mind as well. When he starts an idea at home, and then brings it into the studio, he's like "I've added some drums in there". It's cool because it sets the stage for us to dive into creating. At the end of the day, the musical ideas are what count. So yeah, both aspects complement each other nicely.

George: It's interesting because, as Coop mentioned earlier, people might tend to label you as just garage. But when you really listen, there's a lot more depth to it, especially in the way you work with samples and choose tracks to play off of. Is there a particular style or space you guys are personally excited to explore and extract something new from?

Coop: Yeah, I enjoy ambient sounds. A lot of tracks I've worked on start off at home and then I bring them down to the studio for us to finish it off. They all start off more mellow and ambient and I'll realise this beat could actually have a rhythm to it. Then the track evolves into something more because of that ambient influence.

Darryl: Yeah, there's a new track that isn't ready to come out yet, it'd be next year if it does, called 'One More Time'. It's a proper housey vibe.

Coop: It's speed-garage essentially.

George: I think sometimes when people listen to your music, they're like "How does this all come together?" because there's so much happening. But if you really break it down, you can hear each element distinctly. I guess that's kind of the essence of a party, right? There's a lot happening, but when you focus on the individual aspects, you can appreciate them independently. How important is that "party vibe" or the essence of the party for you?

Darryl: That's it all for me.

Cooper: The whole thing for us is the fun. And that's what a party is meant to be like. So, for us it's all about music that'll set the party on fire (laugha).

George: Have there been any highlight moments from your events recently or even early days where you've seen something happen and you've been like, "Yeah, we did that, we made this happen"?

Cooper: All the Radio 1 support recently has been incredible.

Darryl: The Boiler Room.

Cooper: Oh yeah, that Boiler Room set by Yung Singh was insane. It's mind-blowing to think that so many people on the other side of the world were vibing to our music. It was a pivotal moment in our career. It took us by surprise too, because you'll send tunes to DJs all the time, but you never know if they'll play them, let alone at a Boiler Room in front of such a huge crowd. Yeah, that was amazing.

Darryl: Even the first time that song got played was one for me as well. Apart from the Yung Singh video, the other video that's a big one of that was a bit of footage of that song going crazy four hours after we made it - from making it to playing it, that was pretty cool.

Cooper: Yeah that was the first show in our All Nyte Long tour. It was the opening show in Nottingham and that gig was just incredible to start the tour with that strong of a show. Nottingham is the closest city to our hometown so all our mates came over for that. So yeah, the feeling at the end of that show was just unbelievable, it was such a high. Getting to play all that new music especially "Y'all Ready For Dis', and watching how mental it went, we never expected it to go that mad.

George: Yeah, beautiful moment. Your journey has been so organic, taking unexpected turns that, as you mentioned, feel like pleasant surprises. It unfolds so naturally, almost as if it was meant to be in that situation.

Both: Thank you.

Darryl: There's this really cool sample from El-B on a track and we actually did a remix for his label. On our first record, he remixed our first song and it wasn't explained why or anything. But it was just like that's mental, considering he's a major influence for both me and Coop. I still don't even know how to recreate what he did. Even though I've messaged him and just said "Right, just tell me then," and he sent us like 20 audio notes back telling us exactly how to do it, and I'm still like it just sounds okay.

Cooper: I'm a massive fan of Burial. And Burial's big influence was El-B with the drums and rhythms. So, El-B is the king of it all and the fact that he remixed our first single was just madness.

Darryl: There's one sample of him from an Instagram video. I remember asking him on Instagram, "Why'd you end up remixing our track?" and there's a sample of him being like "I just thought Y U QT and how they do their thing is cool, it's different," but obviously he says it cooler in his London accent. Yeah, that was a big moment for us.

George: Going back to your mention of the Radio 1 love, it's hard to find that balance of pushing out something that is regarded as commercially valued and something that feels honest to yourself. Is there a moment where you'd consider pushing towards something more commercial, or is the focus solely on the party?

Darryl: The time it felt like that was with "Y'all Ready For Dis'. Our thought was whatever is gonna happen with that song, is gonna happen with that song. Between the TikToks and how much they were playing it on Radio 1, I don't think you can make music with that intention specifically. And also, the day you change the sound or the path of the music is the day you kill it.

Cooper: I don't think we'd ever approached anything like "Oh, we want to make a commercial hit" or anything like that all we ever want to make is the stuff we enjoy making or we like to hear. You can't predict things either, you let it go as far as it can go. Seeing that Yung Singh video and how happy all these people are, if it's making people happy and dance then I think it is all just about the party. It's all about that at the end of the day. Everything else is just an added bonus.

George: I think you've made many people's ears happy. How far off are we from making people's eyes happy and seeing visuals from you guys?

Cooper: I've got an idea for a music video. I've had the idea for years, but now we've got the song to play with it. So, fingers crossed we're gonna get that together in the next couple of months.

George: Any subtle hints towards what it may include?

Cooper: Not to sound funny but, it's about a party basically (laugha). It's exactly what we're all about. Yeah, that's the idea. It's about a party, music being delivered to said party and setting the party off. That's the basic premise of it.

George: Beautiful.

Darryl: It is a bit of a hard one to navigate on that side of stuff with imagery. It's just a weird one. When you see an artists' image in the public, 90% of it isn't even their clothes or their personally curated style. When we came to do the shoot with you guys, I left and I was like I feel so uncool putting my clothes back on, like just my normal clothes. 'Cause when I was younger I had it in me that I wanted to get dressed, because you get to dress up and feel as ridiculous as you want. So, just doing that shoot with you, it opened up that side of creativity like wait a minute, why do I buy my Dickies black? Why don't I just paint them like I actually want to? It's just a classic social media hell trap of you see what you see and you don't think everyone goes and puts their normal Birkenstocks on after the shoot. But it's hard to make that mental adjustment. This shoot did really help with that.

George: Yeah, there's no need to change the canvas you've already got, just add on top of it. Let it grow normally. Just before we close off, I'd just like to say I could sit and talk to you guys for hours on end, thank you both.

Both: Thank you.