

yarrow

A photograph of Maddy Herbert, a young woman with long blonde hair, sitting on a solid red background. She is wearing a patterned, textured jacket and black boots. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. To her left is a small, clear glass vase containing a bouquet of white and yellow flowers. A small, clear glass object, possibly a bottle cap, lies on the red surface near the vase. The overall aesthetic is minimalist and artistic.

Interview with Maddy
Herbert from Velvet
Bloom

Lana Del Rey
'Chemtrails
Over The
Country Club'
reviewed

Photography by Anthony Rennick



POPPY  LISSIMAN

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When looking at 2021 festival line-ups, it'd be easy to assume there is a distinct lack of artists that aren't men.

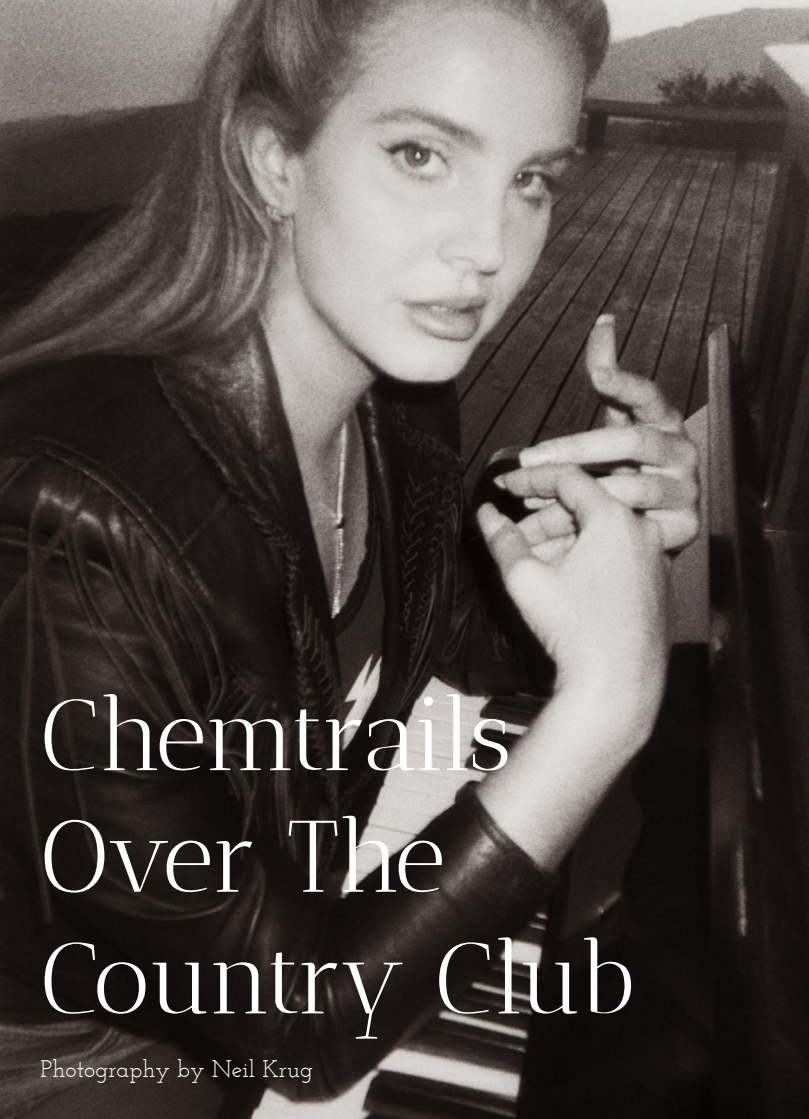
Looking back over the line-up announcements, it was hard to tell if bookers had purposefully not booked women, or if they just aren't aware of the fact there are women out there making music deserving of the platform. It's hard to tell which scenario is worse, do these bookers just not like women or are they totally oblivious to female artists? Either way it speaks to a great deal of misogyny. The fact that Nathan Evans, the sea shanty guy, and The Hara have been booked for festivals off the back of their TikTok presences is just a further kick in the teeth; The Hara got big for covering other people's songs, very often women's songs, and Nathan Evans is just this year's Walmart Yodel Kid. They'll be here for a summer and then forgotten about, just like Walmart Yodel Kid. To argue that

these people can fill a set better than a band with at least one woman in the mix and that their music is better and will draw a bigger crowd is utterly ridiculous

The new move of putting on a stage of only women only adds further to othering non-male artists. To truly promote female and non-binary talent, these artists need to be playing on the main stages, not being pushed off onto a side stage that requires people to venture away from some of the bands they are likely to want to see. It feels like a very performative move just to get people on the internet to stop kicking up a fuss about the total lack of gender representation throughout the rest of the festival.

No matter how people argue against the idea of the lack of women on line-ups being sexist, it just illustrates that the sexism in the music industry is insidious and needs to have people working more actively against it.

Gender diversity at festivals: is it laziness or misogyny?



Chemtrails Over The Country Club

Photography by Neil Krug

Following the controversial Instagram post in which Lana Del Rey asked if she could “go back to singing about being embodied” without “being crucified”, where she was going to go after the Grammy nominated Norman Fucking Rockwell! was anyone’s guess.

Del Rey’s 7th studio album, *Chemtrails Over The Country Club*, is a pensive meditation on the perils of fame, Del Rey’s pre-fame life, and past relationships. Drawing influence from a multitude of her previous albums as well as 2020’s *Violet Bent Backwards Over The Grass*, this latest instalment is a work of self-awareness, with call-backs to previous songs exemplifying Del Rey’s growth on her tumultuous journey through fame.

Opening track ‘White Dress’ takes the listener back to Del Rey’s time waitressing and performing as May Jailer, Sparkle Jump Rope Queen, or Lizzy Grant and The Phenomena. The whispery vocals of this

track feel symbolic given that Del Rey still dreamt of her fame yet felt unease as to where she would find herself once in its hold. They can at times feel out of place against the powerful melody, however – the track could perhaps be benefitted by a more powerful and authoritative voice. The more powerful but mournful vocal employed on ‘Dark But Just A Game’ exploring her flirtations with the dangerous and unhealthy light of fame brings the classic melancholy expected from Del Rey. Feeling like a “be careful what you wish for” warning, this track adds a sense of drama to the album and you can feel where the shift from Elizabeth Grant into Lana Del Rey was made.

At this point in the album a significant chronology appears – the sentiments expressed in the closing moments of ‘White Dress’, (“Cause it made me feel / Made me feel like a god”) feel especially poignant and

emphasises that Del Rey is taking the listener through her career choices and coming to terms with the way they will impact the rest of her life. Once we reach the track, 'Dance Til We Die' there is a calmer feeling to the album. The overall attitude is more optimistic and comforting. The story Del Rey is telling is coming to its conclusion and she is keen to express that the choices she's made throughout *Chemtrails Over The Country Club* and her career have been the right ones. This is achieved with her soft and warm vocals that rise to celebratory peak evoking a feeling of joy. *Chemtrails Over The Country Club* sees a lot of imagery repeated from previous works and even direct call-backs to lyrics. For story-telling purposes, this reuse of imagery makes it easy to see the ways in which Del Rey exhibits her growth from past albums. Just like in *Norman Fucking Rockwell's* 'Mariners

Apartment Complex', Del Rey applies herself to a symbolic "candle in the wind" to assert her newfound independence in both 'Tulsa Jesus Freak' and 'Yosemite'. Aurally, these tracks are quite similar to *Ultraviolence* however they now centre around Del Rey's own invincibility and heroism rather than that of the people around her. This is a refreshing turn - the darker elements of Del Rey's sound are present, but lack the romanticism of abusive power dynamics that could often alienate in *Ultraviolence*. The way Del Rey can take the listener back to exact moments in her previous work further illustrates her astute poeticism and raconteur status. The crazy days of *Born To Die* and *Paradise*, where she was still finding her feet in the public eye, have subsided to a new optimism reminiscent of the tones of *Lust For Life*. From start to finish, the listener is taken almost

chronologically through the sounds Lana Del Rey has explored in her previous albums, giving *Chemtrails Over The Country Club* a near-cinematic edge. She has retained all her classic elements: David Lynch references, the characterisation of LA, and a focus on her past loves. For already ardent fans, there are plenty of lyrical easter eggs that add even more to the stories already told rather than feeling like a stale rehashing of the same old subjects. *Chemtrails Over The Country Club* is complete, self-realised, and a refreshingly honest celebration of female independence.

Velvet Bloom

Velvet Bloom singer, Maddy Herbert, blends soulful pop and jazz together to create a truly unique sound, so dreamy and ethereal it's hard to imagine how the past year has affected the people behind the music. Chatting to Maddy via Zoom from her sunny Australian garden, we discussed how the bushfires and COVID have impacted her and the band.

Hi Maddy! For anyone who doesn't know you, please can you give us a little summary of who Velvet Bloom & The Vito Collective are?

Hello! Sure. So I'm Maddy and I sing and write most of the lyrics for the songs on my guitar and then I bring them to my band, The Vito Collective to develop further. The band and I all met in high school during our music class so we've spent a lot of time writing music together and gigging in various forms together now!

Speaking of gigging, how are things looking for you? Things are definitely looking good now; we recently did a VR concert which was exciting and we're just about to head off on a tour supporting Teenage

Dads. It's so nice to be able to get back on a stage and play for real people again. With the combination of the bushfires and coronavirus, it's also nice to start seeing some money coming back in from the music.

I can imagine it is exciting to see things finally returning to normal!

Oh, totally! We've been pretty lucky here and our lockdown hasn't been nearly as long as other places but back in January and February, all our gigs were for bushfire relief so we were donating everything that we made, then we went into lockdown which means we haven't had any actual income from the music in about a year. Even outside of music, I work as a booker for the Night Cat in Fitzroy which means I've still been able to do a little bit of work from

but it totally changed my entire jobrole.

After your support stint with Teenage Dads, do you have any plans to be doing a tour of your own?

We've definitely been looking into the idea but with the fact pretty much all of us have been out of work for a year, touring is looking pretty expensive. I've got a gig in Perth next month that was initially supposed to be a full band show but we've had to cut it down to just me going as plane tickets are wildly expensive at the moment. We've also been playing with the idea of just doing a tour around Victoria but I think for the moment we'll just be working on writing more music and maybe even shooting some more videos. Our guitarist, Rennick, has been doing a lot of photography and video while we've been unable to perform so that'll be a really cool avenue to explore!

Sounds exciting! Is there anything you'd like to plug at the moment?

There are some things that are still under wraps at the moment so I can't say too much but I'll just let everyone know where to find us and get the updates as soon as they're available. You can find us on Spotify, Bandcamp, and Facebook under Velvet Bloom and we're @velvetbloom.music on Instagram.



Artwork by Katie Stewart



Artwork by Romani Alexandra

Instagram: @cherubbs





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