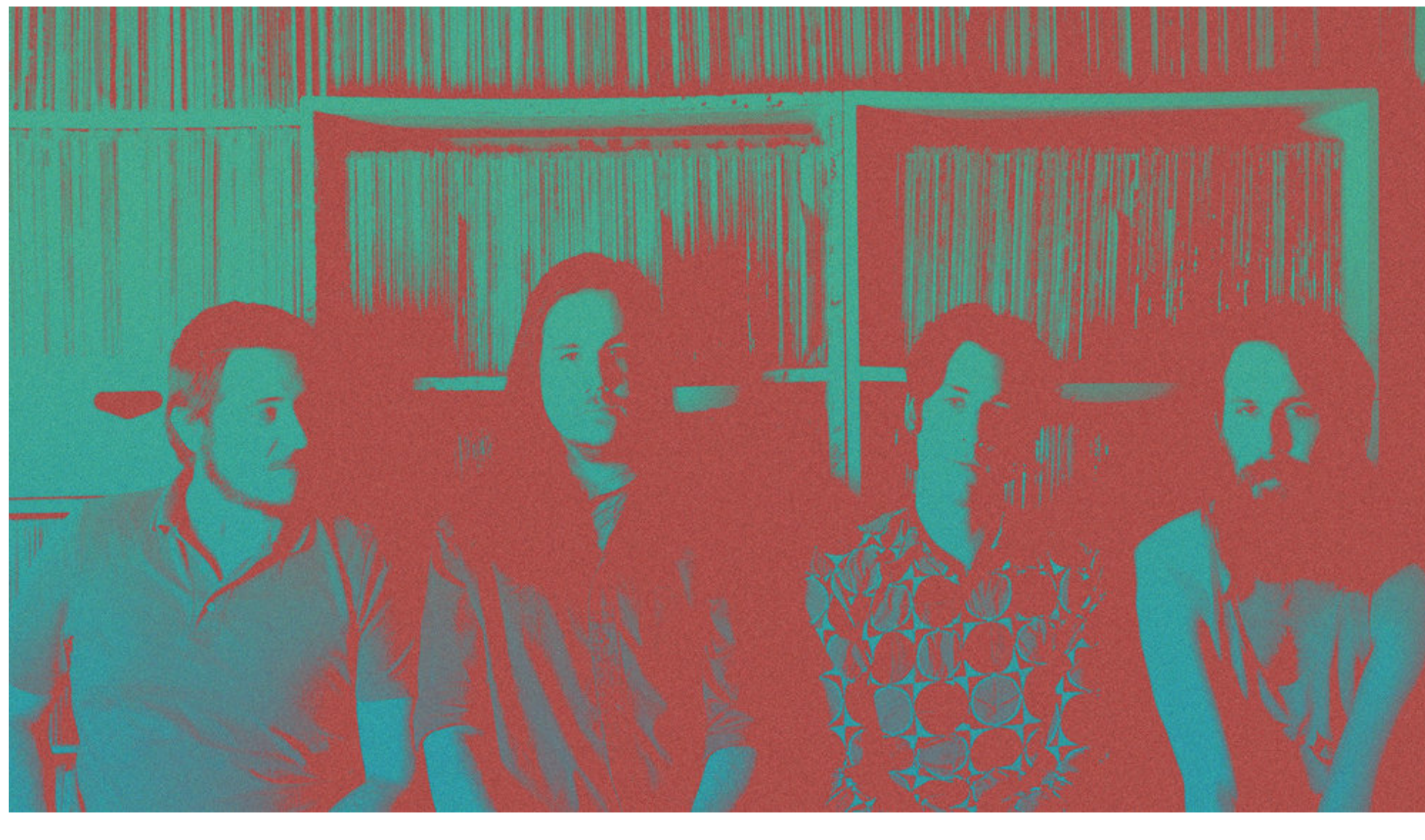


# AN INTERVIEW WITH HONYOCK



Honyock is a band of literal and metaphysical brothers, bred in the Southern Californian desert. Their new album *El Castillo* (out July 20th) is a psych-rock monomyth - a hero's journey through the groovy West. We spoke to them about God, Elvis Costello, and the trappings of suburbia.

## HOW DID WORKING WITH DAVID VANDERVELDE AFFECT YOUR SOUND? HOW DID THE EVOLUTION FROM DEMOS TO PRODUCED RECORD TRANSPIRE?

We were proverbially trapped in our "Record Dungeon," the space we shed songs and cook up recordings, for about 3 years before finally hooking up with Dave. The original plan was to self-record a 30 song catalogue of our best material to tape, release it ourselves and go on tour forever. As chance would have it, a mutual friend was sharing those demos with Chris from Friendship Fever unbeknownst to us. Chris turned out to be the dude who released Dr. Dog's first three records on the label Park The Van, one of our biggest inspirations. We got about 20-25 tracks in before some of those tracks got to Dave via Friendship and he formed a plan to make a studio record in a couple days at New Monkey in between tours with Father John Misty.

I think we learned how little we knew while watching Dave and Eli Thomson work. They are wizards and knew how to take what we wanted to do and amplify that by a thousand. We usually hide behind a comfortable layer of lo-fi in order to make everything seem hazy and out of focus. The record has more presence to it because of them, for sure. More clarity. They sound like really fresh songs yet retain most of the charm of the demos.

The whole thing has been a trip for us. I think we just about embraced complete and utter obscurity forever when some old fashioned good luck came our way. I think that is a good place to be mentally. We are really grateful for anyone to be listening, whatsoever. We ended up naming our record after that mutual friend who shared our music with the label.

## YOU DESCRIBE YOUR MUSIC AS 'PEYOTE-TONK.' HOW WAS THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE DESERT INFLUENCED THE VIBE OF THE ALBUM?

Man, what a question. Sunshine, who plays drums, is a desert boy. California was parched during most of our life as a band so far. But maybe it's how the desert bakes under the sun and then gets so cold the moment it goes away. I think most of us would settle for a happy medium between the dynamic shifts in our lives, but then again I don't know what that kind of life looks like. I think to be at the mercy of climate, and the circumstances of your natural surroundings produces a kind of reverence for life, even if it gets in the way of expressing that sentiment when you are in the middle of it. I've seen a lot of people who grow up too sheltered from that and end up destroying their own lives out of sheer boredom.

There is also kind of a culture drought in suburbia like the one Honyock sprung from. I think most suburban kids spend the rest of their life in a mostly fruitless pursuit of manufactured authenticity. True authenticity comes from the wellspring of humanity that each of us share, which is basically summed up in the question "how do you really feel about it, man?" I can't think of a better question to ask before each of the songs on the record.

## WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE ELVIS COSTELLO TRACK?

This one is too important. I gotta call the band.

Dialing... Dialing...

Tyler: "Almost Blue". Wait, "Blue Chair"! It's a tough choice... "Almost Blue". Final answer.

Sunshine: It's a tie between "Watching the Detectives" and "Welcome to the Working Week".

Mason: At the moment? "In Another Room."

For me it's "Ship Building"... or "Tokyo Storm Warning"... or...

## AFTER KNOWING EACH OTHER FOR AS LONG AS YOU HAVE, IS THERE ANY BROTHERLY COMPETITION AMONG THE BAND?

I'd say competition is the least present of all our brotherly traits. I think we are pretty good at filling in all the empty spaces without walking on each others' toes too much. As Mason's little brother I always wanted to impress my big brother. But I knew I would never play guitar as good as him so I just tried to fill in all the other spaces. I feel a similar way with Sunshine and Tyler. I can't do what they do, so we play together, ensemble. Competition freaks me out and is generally uninspiring.

## WHICH SONG OFF OF YOUR RECENTLY RELEASED ALBUM *EL CASTILLO* ARE YOU MOST STOKED TO PERFORM LIVE?

"I'll Never Let You In Again" has a lot of harmonies and a bitching solo that I get to watch Mason play. "Saints of the Pyre" is my grand message to the world and I always feel good about playing that in front of people. Although, funny enough, the track that comes to mind is "Into My Arms," which is the oldest song on the record. Mason wrote that when he was 18 and living in Washington for a spell. It's simple and heavy. I never get tired of it.

## EVEN THOUGH ALL OF THE SONGS, PARTICULARLY "PATRON," SEEM TO COME FROM AN INTIMATE SPACE, WHAT TRACK WOULD YOU SAY MOST REFLECTS THE BAND'S ETHOS?

All of them at different times and none of them sometimes. Right now I feel like "Heather" represents each of us as a band pretty well. It's relatively straightforward, lyric centered rock and roll. It captures us live in the studio, with some overdubs done at home that captured the character of the demo. We like a kind of hybrid approach. I wrote it with the others in mind, it draws on our collective experiences. It is also one of the ones I went in and mixed a little more dry than some of Dave's mixes of the track. His were great but I wanted it to sound like our Record Dungeon, which is pretty acoustically dead due to it being surrounded by walls of records, yet the roof is pretty high up so there is some space in there as well. I think we always want to be firmly planted in where we come from, even as we take what feels like giant leaps forward.

## DO YOU THINK THAT NOSTALGIC HAS BECOME AN OVERUSED TERM IN DESCRIBING MUSIC? OR IS THERE VALUE TO IT?

I think the Latin roots of nostalgia suggest a feeling of pain associated with home. As I get older and the temporal location of my childhood/youth gets further away I do find myself consuming the little artifacts of that time with a really seductive ache. Things that may have no value outside of my own attachment to them.

Though I think that personal nostalgia is radically different from the cultural nostalgia we associate with the regurgitation of aesthetic tropes from our collective past, like the creation of music, clothes, media or whatever with a 60's, 70's, 80's, style to them. Both kinds of nostalgia are selective in terms of what is remembered and what is forgotten. The truth is that every period of music probably sucked for the most part. Time sifts the good from the bad and then we can idolize that period to ultimately escape from the present. That's because everything is relevant and irrelevant all at once.

Honyock is far from a revival band. We don't think there is a golden age of music. We could care less about the perceived longevity of any genre of music we get categorized with. We are naturally drawn to certain sounds, but they are all just different colors to paint with at the end of the day. Some of my favorite records are recorded on an Iphone.

## ULTIMATE CROSS COUNTRY ROAD TRIP ALBUM??

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