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INTERVIEWS

COMING FULL CIRCLE: AN INTERVIEW WITH MANSIONAIR

Mike Finnegan 1 Day Ago 18 Mins

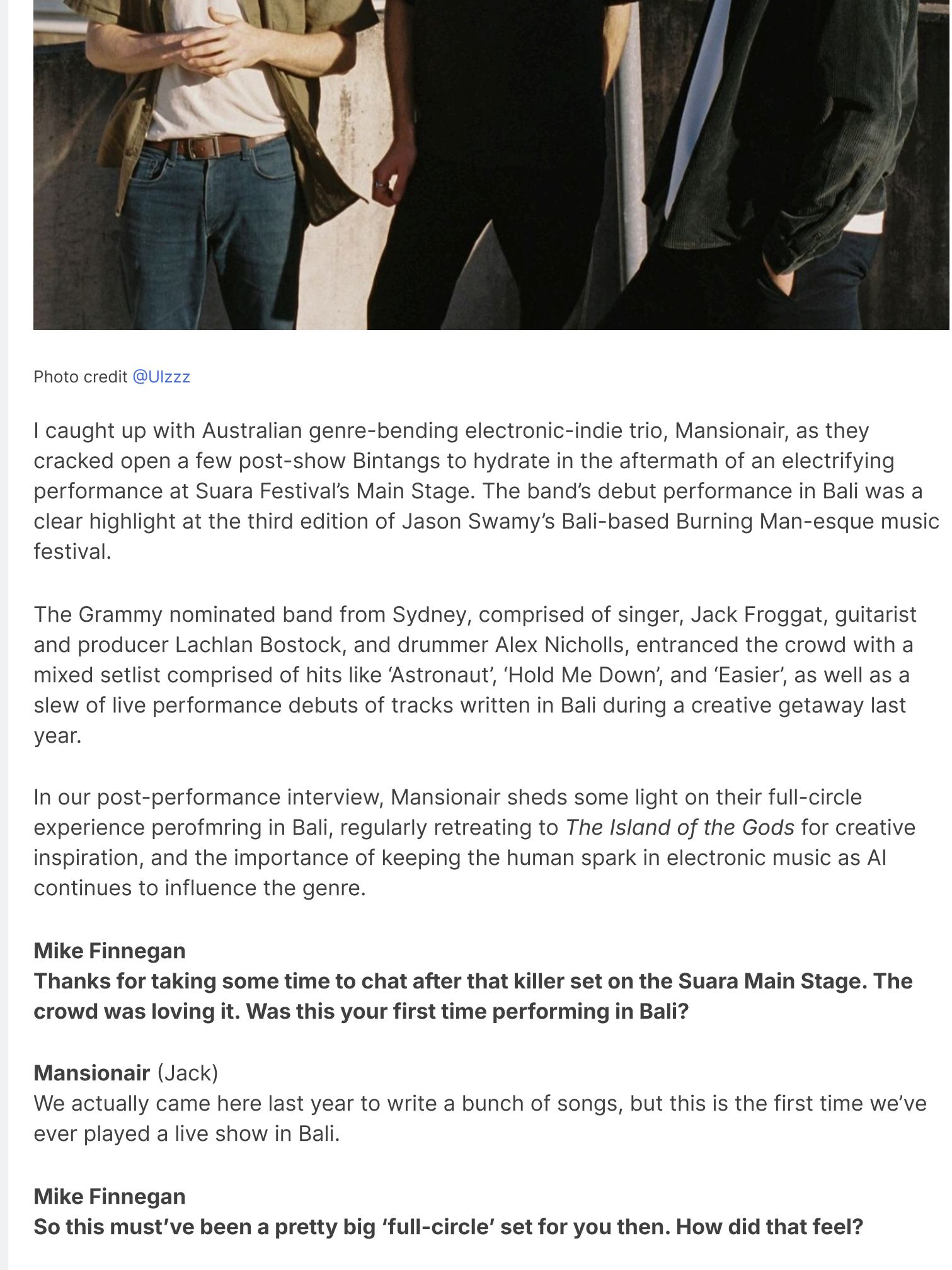


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I caught up with Australian genre-bending electronic-indie trio, Mansionair, as they cracked open a few post-show Bintangs to hydrate in the aftermath of an electrifying performance at Suara Festival's Main Stage. The band's debut performance in Bali was a clear highlight at the third edition of Jason Swamy's Bali-based Burning Man-esque music festival.

The Grammy nominated band from Sydney, comprised of singer, Jack Froggatt, guitarist and producer Lachlan Bostock, and drummer Alex Nicholls, entranced the crowd with a mixed setlist comprised of hits like 'Astronaut', 'Hold Me Down', and 'Easier', as well as a slew of live performance debuts of tracks written in Bali during a creative getaway last year.

In our post-performance interview, Mansionair sheds some light on their full-circle experience performing in Bali, regularly treating to The Island of the Gods for creative inspiration, and the importance of keeping the human spark in electronic music as AI continues to influence the genre.

Mike Finnegan Thanks for taking some time to chat after that killer set on the Suara Main Stage. The crowd was loving it. Was this your first time performing in Bali?

Mansionair (Jack) We actually came here last year to write a bunch of songs, but this is the first time we've ever played a live show in Bali.

Mike Finnegan So this must've been a pretty big 'full-circle' set for you then. How did that feel?

Mansionair (Lachlan) Yeah it was a really nice experience because we played the songs that we wrote here last year, so it was nice to come back and immediately test the new songs.

We just came last year because we wanted to get out of Sydney with winter, and we were like, let's go to Bali and write some music. And then, yeah, now we're back playing the songs that we wrote a year ago when we were here.

Half the songs we played today were the first time we've ever played them. It was a bit of a test run. We were like, if they're going to work anywhere, it's probably going to be where we wrote them.

Mike Finnegan It was fun. It's always nerve-racking playing new songs because no one's ever heard them before and you can kind of get in your own head about it. But no, it was great. It was fun, and the crowd really seemed to enjoy it.

Mike Finnegan So, I suppose up until tonight, Bali has been more of a creative haven for you rather than a typical tour stop.

Mansionair (Jack) That would be brilliant, I'm sure Bali would love to have you guys back. You mentioned harnessing that energy from tonight to fuel future projects—that collective energy from such a large number of people and all synced up. As artists, what kind of energetic power do you think festivals have? Particularly, festivals like Suara—with such a beautiful natural backdrop, abstract architecture, and an diverse lineup?

Mansionair (Alex) I think people are just more open here in general. They hear something that they're kind of interested in—and just go towards that thing and follow that path. It's a different mindset, being at a festival. I think you're just more open to explore... whatever!

Mansionair (Lachlan) And as performers, maybe it just it feels more... genuine? Well, maybe genuine is the wrong way of putting it, but it feels genuine because you know there are people [in the crowd] that have probably stumbled across you, who have no idea who you are—as opposed to when you do your own show, you assume most of the people there know who you are because they've bought tickets—so feeling that new energy is nice; when someone's like "Hey I was just walking past and I saw your set and now I like your music!"

Mike Finnegan Can you tell me a bit more about using Bali as your creative base?

Mansionair (Jack) I mean, we love this place. I feel like it's Australia's second home. So it's nice to come here. We love all the things that Balinese culture offers, yoga, meditation. So it's nice to kind of have access to that while you're writing.

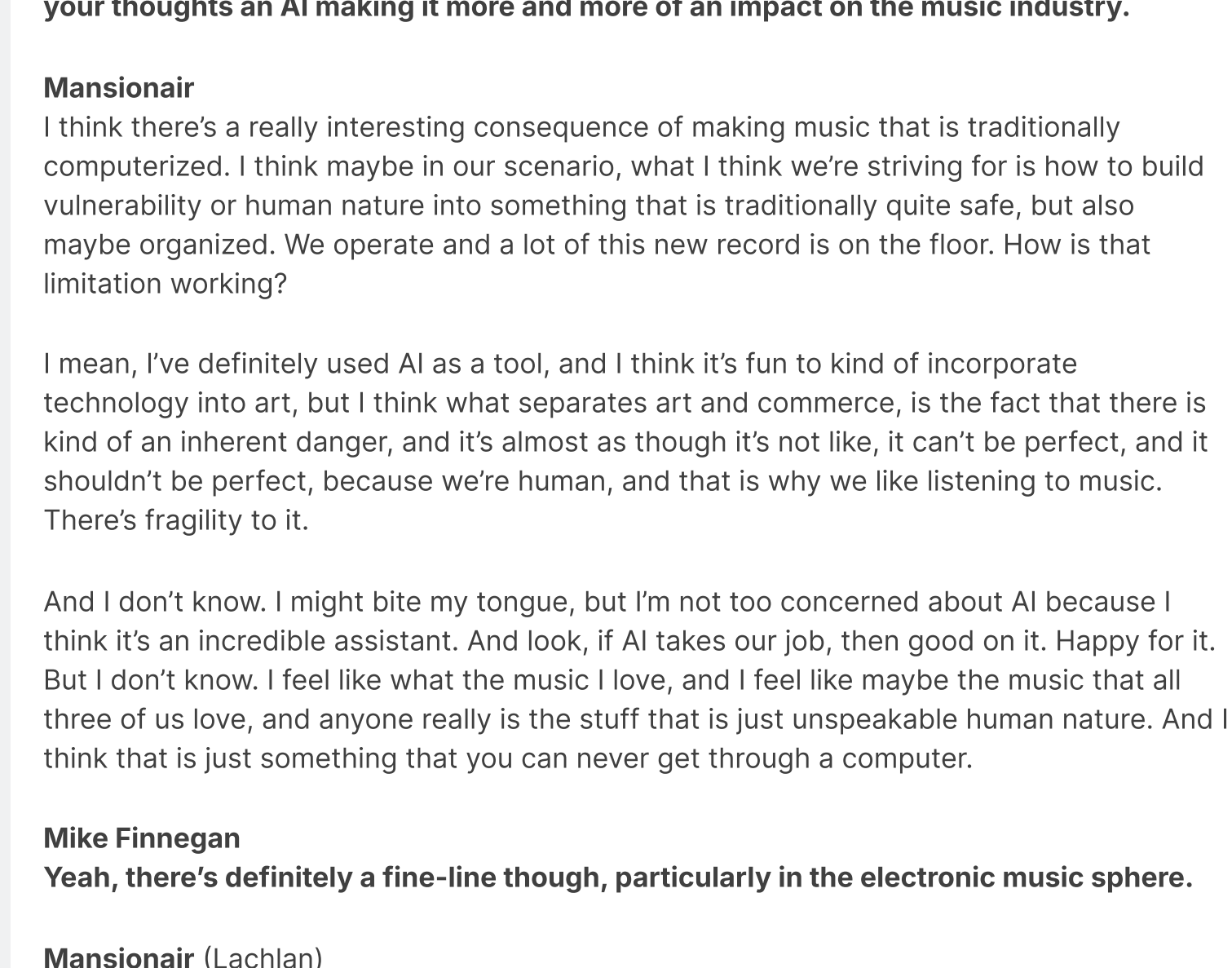
I feel like we're kind of trying to find a little bit of inner peace as well. And this island offers that. So it's a lot of fun, I think, to write amongst that surrounding. The surfing here is amazing, so it's nice to just be able to go for a surf, or go do some yoga, or go meditate, and then come back and make music. I think it really kind of aligns with what we want out of music, and what we want out of life.

Everything is just slowed down here.

Mike Finnegan Everything apart from the scooter driving, anyway.

Mansionair (Jack) (Laughs) Yeah, yeah, true. (laughs) It's both in our comfort zone and just so out of our comfort zone all at the same time—which I think is probably good for doing something creative.

Because if we were just in our comfort zone sitting in a hot tub, you know, we'd be a bit too relaxed. Bali has those two sides coming together, so it's interesting place to write.



Mike Finnegan How do you think your collaborative and creative synergy has evolved from your "Pick Me Up" days back in 2014, to the new tracks you're working on in Bali now?

Mansionair (Lachlan) I mean, it's a long time to do anything, especially a music project. We all want to get certain things out of it, so everyone's input is valid and we're all trying to make this thing together, so there's a lot of give-and-take, I think—which is nice.

With the recent stuff we've been doing we've got a bit of perspective... there's a bit of quiet confidence that comes with what this band is and what we sound like.

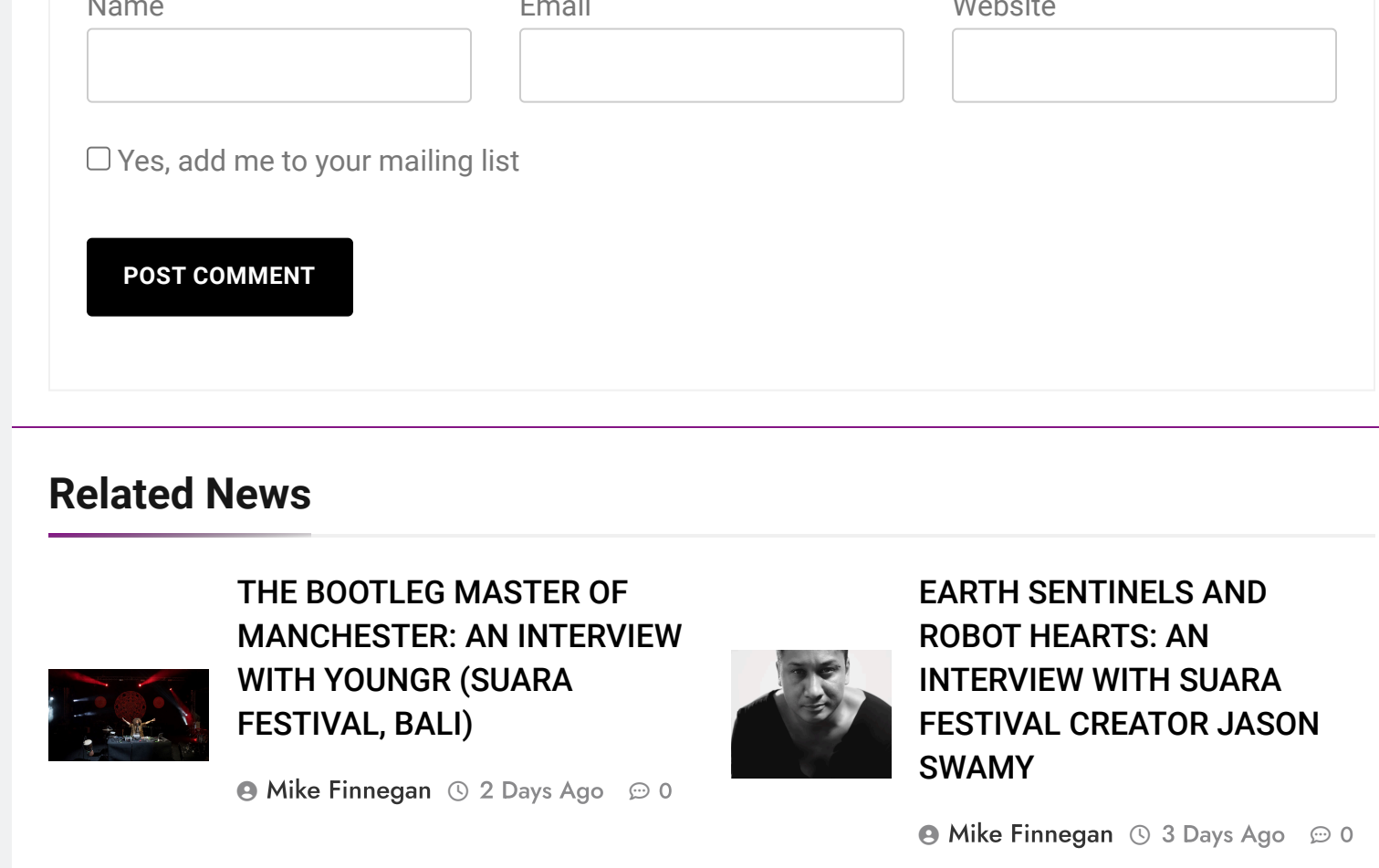
We've all like gone off and done our own little side-projects and "side-quests" um side quests um so it's been nice to then be able to come back and be like hey let's make like the next thing for our band it's all like really you know affirming we know exactly what it is it's really exciting I feel genuinely I think the excitement around the new stuff is like probably the best it's ever been just always a good feeling

Mansionair (Jack) I think I think there's like a there's something really cool in like growing individually and collectively in the same same time over a period of 10 years.

I think we understand our weaknesses and our strengths as a collective. And I think like growing up and kind of like going out and trying other things and learning new skills and stuff and being able to constantly question your comfort zone as a creator.

I feel like what is so fun about this project is that is really is an equal three—all of our ideas are valid.

This quite an inspiring project to be a part of because I think you understand by going out and doing other things alone, you think you understand what Alex brings to the melodies that we write together, and how we complement each other.



Mike Finnegan As an electronic indie band—you're kind of merging two musical worlds. What are your thoughts an AI making it more and more of an impact on the music industry.

Mansionair I think there's a really interesting consequence of making music that is traditionally computerized. I think maybe in our scenario, what I think we're striving for is how to build vulnerability or human nature into something that is traditionally quite safe, but also maybe organized. We operate and a lot of this new record is on the floor. How is that limitation working?

I mean, I've definitely used AI as a tool, and I think it's fun to kind of incorporate technology into art, but I think what separates art and commerce, is the fact that there is kind of an inherent danger, and it's almost as though it's not like, it can't be perfect, and it shouldn't be perfect, because we're human, and that is why we like listening to music. There's fragility to it.

And I don't know. I might bite my tongue, but I'm not too concerned about AI because I think it's an incredible assistant. And look, if AI takes our job, then good on it. Happy for it. But I don't know. I feel like what the music I love, and I feel like maybe the music that all three of us love, and anyone really is the stuff that is just unspakable human nature. And I think that is just something that you can never get through a computer.

Mike Finnegan Yeah, there's definitely a fine-line though, particularly in the electronic music sphere.

Mansionair (Lachlan) I think if you're gonna use it to make great music and help you make tools, like, fuck yeah, fantastic. That's great. If it, yeah, as you said, the stuff that I like is the stuff where it's a person's story, is just as important as the thing that is just unspakable human nature. It's a harder thing to, stuff like music is holistic.

Mansionair (Lachlan) And I think at the moment, AI music is just taking like an aspect of music. When we start getting into the world of like fully generated artists, when someone's like, "Oh, have you heard of this like three-piece duo out of the Netherlands?" And it's like, oh, nope—they don't exist... then, that will be an interesting day for sure.

Mike Finnegan At the rate things are moving at, that 'Non-existent AI band conversation' may take place in a month's time.

Mansionair (Jack) (Laughs) Yeah, yeah, it's happening! Funnily enough, I think I feel less self-conscious about a robot being better than me, or doing something amazing, than just like this 17 year-old prodigy who's turned up. Where I'm like, "Ughh... aww mannnn..."

With the robot, I'm like, "Yeah, fair enough, fair enough, you're going to take over anyway..." (Laughs)

But yeah, I think it will be still missing that personal element for a long time. Maybe it won't ever get that thing, you know, that bit of magic that humans add.

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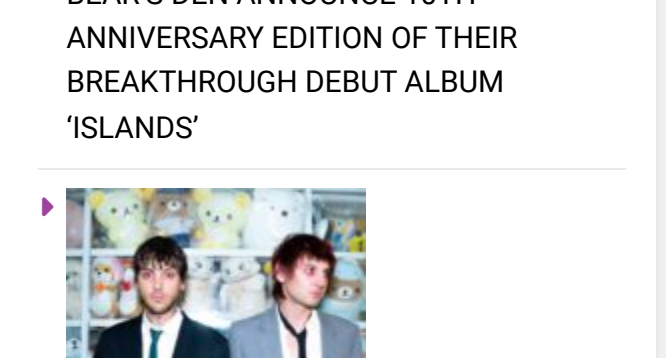
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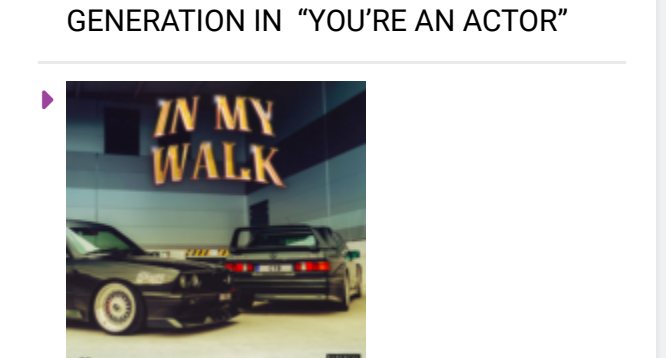
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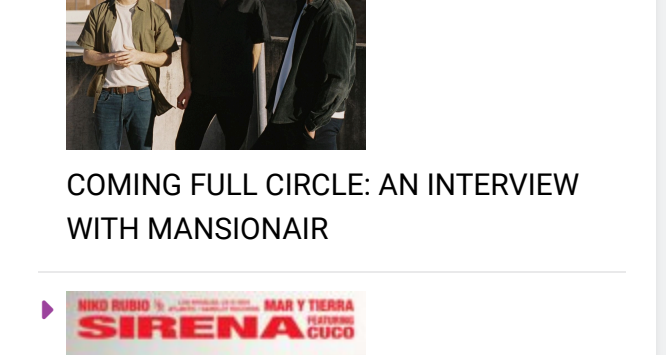
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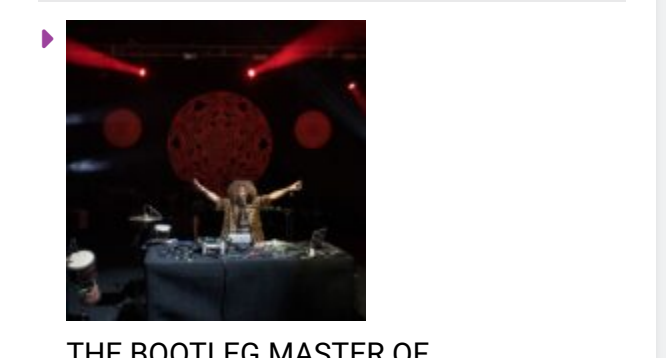
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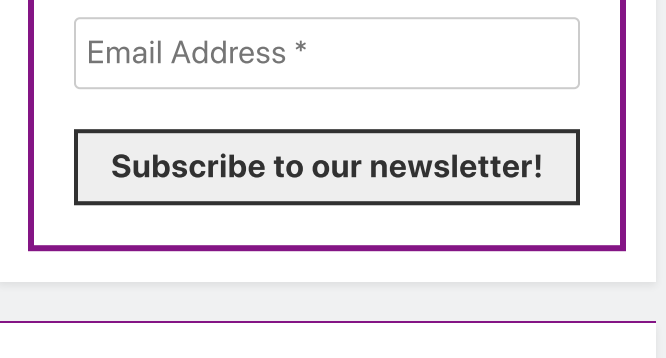
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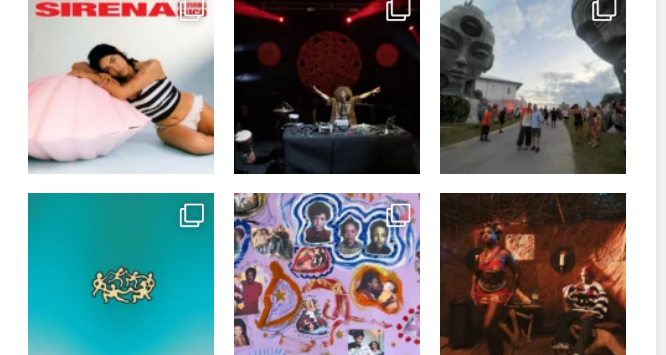
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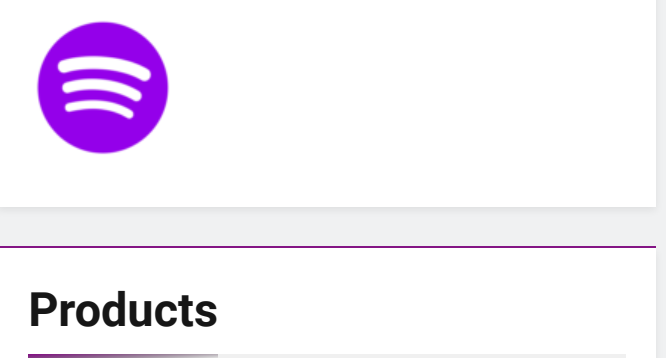
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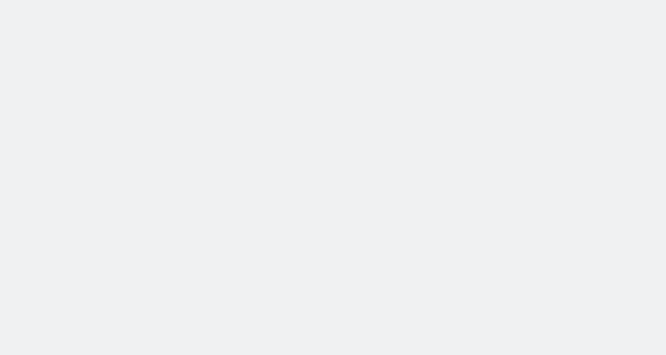
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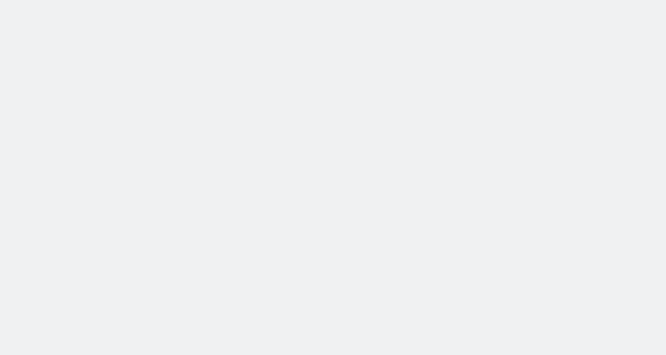
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