



STB: THREE EQUALS ONE
Bilger, Audrey; Pawelski, Cheryl. **Rockrgrl** 41 (Sep/Oct 2001): 20-22.

Abstract (summary)

More like supercharged poetry than standard rock and roll fare, STB has been compared to Patti Smith, Siouxsie & The Banshees, The Stooges, and early Pretenders. With Beefy Shaw on drums laying down incessant rhythmic hooks, Lee Kennedy placing sinuom, soul-infused bass, and Sonia Tetlow's edgy guitar and vocals soaring over me whole thing, STB delivers a riveting show from start to finish. Shaw and Kennedy were working with Tetlow on a project called "Full Circle," a musical program she created to raise awareness about se mal assault issues among high school students. STB's first single garnered critical acclaim from regional press and college radio circles.

Full Text

More like supercharged poetry than standard rock and roll fare, STB has been compared to Patti Smith, Siouxsie & The Banshees, The Stooges, and early Pretenders. Comparisons fail to do justice, however, to STBs undeniable individuality. With Beefy Shaw on drums laying down incessant rhythmic hooks, Lee Kennedy placing sinuom, soul-infused bass, and Sonia Tetlow's edgy guitar and vocals soaring over me whole thing, STB delivers a riveting show from start to finish.

The group formed in the summer of 1998 when Tetlow, who had been playing solo acousticshows aroui id Atlanta, was told by several club owners that she needed to find a band if she wanted to get gigs. Shaw and Kennedy were working with Tetlow on a project called "Full Circle," a musical program she created to raise awareness about se mal assault issues among high school students. From their first rehearsal the frio clicked. "It's not like we made a conscious decision to start a band." Tetlow says. "It just felt really good." STB's first single garnered critical acclaim from regional press and college radio circles.

We spoke with the members of STB to discuss their second album, Swerve, whichyrfiey were initie process of completing to follow-up their first album, Spit.

What sparked your desire to become musicians?

TETLOW: My mom used to be an opera singer and my dad was a priest. I grew up with classical music and played classical piano. I think I got the drama from listening to Bach. When I saw a woman playing guitar for the first time, I said, "That's what I want to do." I took a college road trip with friends to hear Melissa Etheridge play in Houston. On the way home I asked my mend what he wanted to do with his life. He pointed to the radio and said "that." I said, "Me too." The next day I bought a guitar. Neither one of us Has looked back since.

SHAW: My mom is a flute player and my dad has a really beautiful voice. He's a great singer, and he's goofy. He would sing Harry Belafonte or Jewish chants. You never knew what he was going to start singing. I play piano, flute, and accordion, among other instruments. Drums are my latest thing.

TETLOW: Becky can pick up any instrument, go "how does this work?" and play it! She's only been playing drums for the duration of this band.

KENNEDY: I've been at it for about ten years. The interest came from my father who was also a bassist. I grew up listening to him play Sly & the Family Stone licks, James Brown, and then Chicago. I've always had music around me because the whole family plays. It seemed like the only choice to me, but not without the long hours of practice and devotion to harvest the craft.

How did Spit come about?

TETLOW: I like to record because it documents my work as an artist. I've got two other solo albums. It's funny to look back and listen to the first one, because there's so much I didn't know.

Did you decide to not shop for a record deal or did you just want to go the do-it-yourself route?

TETLOW: We don't really know how to do that. We just wanted to record. Rob Gal [producer of both albums] is a good friend of mine. I've recorded with

him at his studio in previous bands. He heard our stuff and said, "Let's get this recorded."

I played acoustic guitar for five years, and playing electric is a whole different feel. When I went in to record the single, I was tuning and Rob took my amp- it was on two-and put it up to eight. When I hit that, my whole body shuddered. It changed everything I wrote after that. It sparked a fire.

He did most of the mixing, which was great, because we only had a certain amount of money. He spent a lot more time on it than we could have afforded.

KENNEDY: It's so great to record with somebody that you feel comfortable with. His whole environment is like a big practice garage. That's what it looks like when you walk in. But it's a studio. It's literally like a big, wooden shack.

Do you see Swerve as a continuation or departure from Spit?

TETLOW: It's definitely a continuation. Spit is a reflection of where we were as a band at the time we recorded it, in August/September '99. We had been together just over a year, loved playing together and connected musically, but hadn't really been tested yet as a band. Something happens when you spend over three years together and go on the road. Maybe it's a trust thing that allows you to take the musical connection deeper. It becomes something else. It's like we're not really a trio because there's this other thing called the music that comes from all three of us when we get together and play. It is its own guiding presence. Swerve comes from that musical place and our interconnectedness as a band.

How has the group composing process evolved?

TETLOW: The first time we ever practiced together, I played a song called "Madness." I started playing it on acoustic, and Lee and Becky just started playing along. It's the same way we play it now. They heard it, I heard what they did, and I was so excited.

We were practicing a song I'd brought in called "Crush." It was still new and we were running through it. When we finished we were all sitting there panting because it's really hot in Atlanta. And Lee goes...

SHAW: He says, "what we ought to do at the end of that song is go right into that new one that starts in B." I'm like, 'Teah, yeah. That's where we need to go, right into that new one that starts in B. Ready?"

TETLOW: I'm looking at both of them...

SHAW: She goes, "What new one?" He says, "The one that we're gonna write right now."

TETLOW: We said, "okay," so he started playing a bass line. Becky and I came in and we wrote the song. That was it. There was the song in B! It's called "Leather." Since then we've written all our songs together.

Before we decided to record Swerve, I went through a writing bout of my own which included two songs that were definite STB material. But ever since "Leather," we start playing and let the songs come as they will. There's been a definite flow to it, and I think more richness because it's coming from three people rather than just me.

How about playing live?

SHAW: We've toured and played around Atlanta quite a bit. We're at the point where we're not sure how often we should play our hometown. You don't want to overdo it there, but you've got to build a following.

KENNEDY: In Atlanta, it's really easy to be dubbed a bar band if you play the same clubs every month, no matter how many people you draw.

TETLOW: We're trying to build audiences here and in New York. The only kind of pigeonhole I run into with bookings is that there are some clubs that want to wait for a night when there's another girl-fronted band.

SHAW: It's ridiculous!

TETLOW: It never occurred to me that would happen. It's gotten better, though. Now when I'm booking, I'll just get the night. I tell them to let me find the bands because I know who we should be playing with. When I book nights ourselves, there are some nights I will book all girl-fronted bands. Then we'll have a night where we mix it up because I don't want to be pigeon-holed. It's about the music. It doesn't really matter who's making the music.

I think it goes back to not having a frame of reference and not knowing the history of women's rock. Club owners think there's a very narrow crowd that will go see womenfronted bands, so they want to have them all together to bring in as many people as possible. In our experience they're wrong, but you can't convince somebody of that. You have to prove it to them. Once they see us they get it.

What does the future hold for STB? Do you want to look to a major label for support?

KENNEDY: It's pretty scary to look to a major because of what's going on. Indie seems like more of a sure bet because we have so much freedom.

SHAW: We really have fun and we love to play together. We have this great musical meeting of the minds.

You bring your audience along for a very exhilarating and uplifting ride.

TETLOW: It's funny that you say that because almost every write-up we get says something about my being a "ticking time bomb ready to demolish the club." I don't feel angry; I'm passionate about what I do, what I sing, and what I play. Maybe, especially because I'm a woman, that gets interpreted as

anger, but I don't ever feel angry. The same thing fuels everything in my life, whether it be art or activism or tending my garden. I follow my heart.

Sometimes an idea or a lyric or a song will take hold and I won't have any peace until I see it through. It's taught me to be a better listener in a philosophical sense, though sometimes I fail. I try to reach people one heart to the next. That's why I love music. It's one of the few ways to really make that connection.

Sidebar

GEAR: TETLOW PLAYS A BRIAN MAY GUILD GUITAR AND USES A FENDER HOTROD DELUXE AMP AND AN ELECTRA CHORUS FEDAL.

SHAW USES LUDWIG DRUMS AND ZILDJIAN CYMBALS.

KENNEDY PLAYS A FENDER JAZZ DELUXE BASS, A.K.A, THE "MICjHTY BOOM STICK." HE USES A D.O.D. OVERDRIVE PEDAL, DUBBED THE "HARBINGER OF PAIN," AN SWR GOLIATH 4X10, (THE "ALMIGHTY GOD OF POWER"), AND A HARTKE 2000 (THE "EAR BLOWER OUTER").

Sidebar

IT'S LIKE WE'RE NOT REALLY A TRIO BECAUSE THERE'S THIS OTHER THING CALLED THE MUSIC THAT COMES FROM ALL THREE OF US WHEN WE GET TOGETHER AND PLAY. IT IS ITS OWN GUIDING PRESENCE.

Copyright ROCKRGRL Inc. Sep/Oct 2001

Indexing (details)
Cite

Subject	Musicians & conductors; Singers; Secondary school students; Bands
Company	Siouxsie & the Banshees
Title	STB: THREE EQUALS ONE
Author	Bilger , Audrey; Pawelski, Cheryl
Publication title	Rockrgrl
Issue	41
Pages	20-22
Number of pages	3
Publication year	2001
Publication date	Sep/Oct 2001
Year	2001
Publisher	ROCKRGRL Inc.
Place of publication	Mercer Island
Country of publication	United States
Publication subject	Music
ISSN	10865985
Source type	Magazines
Language of publication	English
Document type	Interview
Document feature	Photographs
ProQuest document ID	208955575
Document URL	http://ccl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/208955575?accountid=10141
Copyright	Copyright ROCKRGRL Inc. Sep/Oct 2001
Last updated	2010-06-08
Database	GenderWatch

Back to top