

Sufjan Loves Shapes and Sizes

It's not every day that Sufjan Stevens takes an unknown Canadian band to lunch in New York, much signs them to his burgeoning label, Asthmatic Kitty. Yet Victoria's Shapes and Sizes broke bread, got signed after submitting an unsolicited demo and earned praise from the indie rocker's father-in-law. "[Sufjan's father-in-law] really enjoys the chance taking on this album and that we've really been able to go out on a limb," says the band's bassist Nathan Gage.

Ringed endorsements aren't limited to Stevens' immediate family: the entire Asthmatic Kitty camp has plenty of nice things to say about this foursome. Most of the comments involve words like, "theatrical" or "ambitious"; even guitarist and singer Rory Seydel uses "chaos" to illustrate Shapes and Sizes' sound.

Initially, listeners might be more inclined to describe their self-titled debut as intelligent indie rock, but there's a lot more going on than just breezy chords and complex harmonies. "Our

music's like applesauce," says Seydel. "You cut it up and throw it all together and it takes a really long time to cook down."

Part of the record's recipe includes oddly placed riffs, wild tempo changes and plenty of jazz chord progressions. Other tracks feature a flurry of horns, handclaps, and ukulele. "You can only hear so much guitar before going crazy," says Seydel. "We like to pack as many instruments into a recording as possible."

Despite all the extra noises and experimentation, Shapes and Sizes (including Caila Thompson-Hannant on vocals and Jon Crellin on drums) are definitely rooted in pop. "Islands Gone Bad" is a great sing-along number, while "Weekends At a Time" could have been pulled from the Superfriendz' *Slide Show* songbook. Their mix of quirk and pop also brings to mind Stevens, one of their musical heroes and now boss. "It was great that Asthmatic Kitty got back to us. It seemed it was all by chance, but the



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more we thought about it and the more we talked to them about it, this seemed like a really amazing fit."
Bryan Borzykowski