



Bringing a Wild Side to the Edinburgh Music Scene

Edinburgh based-trio Ber (pronounced *bear*) are encouraging Edinburgh Festival-goers to embrace their wild side this August. Their name is absurdist-inspired. Their style is “forest rock.” And singer-songwriter Gabriel Böhmer, lead guitarist Nacho Palacios and drummer Tom Reed are bringing a refreshingly dynamic and intensely satisfying approach to the local scene.

Ber’s minimal, folk-infused songs are a heady mismatch of eclectic cultural influences and temperamental rawness, with stylistic inspiration stemming from Tom Waits, Johnny Cash, Iggy Pop and The Doors through to gypsy, swing, blues and jazz.

To reflect the original stories and time worn experiences found within their music, Ber’s debut album *Fort Growing* was recorded through an old, and slightly broken, record player speaker with each song captured in just one or two takes. The end result is organic and imperfect, but also warm and nostalgic.

Asked to describe their alternative sound, Böhmer explains, “In our songs, both lyrically and sonically, we explore the transient nature of what it is to be human and the flaws and fleeting beauty found in day to day life. The range of instruments we use, and the naturally rough edges of our lo-fi [recorded] process, is a direct result of that approach.”

Ber are dedicated to the experimentation and exploration of sound. As such, the diversity of unique and unexpected instruments utilised on *Fort Growing* is a tribute to the acoustic potential of everyday objects – whether it be a washboard, coffee grinder, doorknob, matches, a didley bow played with a teacup or a microwave hit with a hammer – making for a distinctive listening experience.

As live performers, Ber offer a mesmerising percussive experience. Stripped back to the essence of guitars, vocals and drums alone, their songs are transformed into a dramatic reinterpretation of their recorded sound.

On “Rain”, Böhmer’s vocals are like growling thunder rolling across Depression-era country plains swelling with swing rhythm, while the effect of the slide guitar on “Brouhaha” and “She’s a Painting” sounds like a smooth lightning show set against the backdrop of the electric-storm intensity of the songs themselves.

Driving rhythms accentuate the comic-edged rock of songs such as “Part-Time Bat”, capturing the eyelid-twitching moments of 4am sleep deprivation, and the catchy crowd favourite “Whisky”, a reflection on the moments just before inebriation, delivers impact like a freight train carving a track through Johnny Cash territory. “The recording process for us is all about the idea of delivering a raw sound in its purity, with intentional dirtiness,” says Palacios. “Whereas when we perform live it becomes more active, and experimental in a different way, because we are forced to adapt the songs to be recreated with just guitars and drums. But this means that we are also at liberty to play around with rhythm and time signature, for example, so it becomes quite a spontaneous approach to playing the songs.”

The organic nature of each song, whether recorded or performed live, suggests a sense of Ber having found themselves in a wonderfully conceptual forest, whilst navigating the raw essence of humanity and unleashing their own inner wildness.

Ber are currently working on their second full-length album, which intends to deliver a furthered creative and experiential approach to their recording process. In the meantime, a taste of these new directional changes in Ber’s sound can be heard on their limited edition, 5-song Edinburgh Festival EP, to be released on 10 August 2017.