



BIO: Young Galaxy Spring 2009

***When will inspiration
Ever be enough?
You want to believe me?
Then sing it with love***

"Long Live the Fallen World"

Finding beauty in the everyday may sometimes be a tricky task, but the best art does just that – holds up a mirror to the small yet significant details that make up our lives. In an era where the world seems to move at warp speed and incisive reflection is limited to the latest blog post, Montreal band Young Galaxy's songs remind us of the richness of our universal experiences – from love and loss to despair and hope.

Invisible Republic, Young Galaxy's sophomore release, builds upon founding duo Stephen Ramsay (guitars, vocals) and Catherine McCandless' (keyboards, vocals) penchant for transforming the mundane into the fantastic – catchy hooks build into epic crescendos, while political and ethical concerns share space with emotional observations.

"Our mandate for this record was: if it doesn't make you move, it better make you cry," quips Ramsay. "Even better is making someone cry and dance at the same time. It makes a lot of people uncomfortable, but I like it!"

Invisible Republic is the product of a long musical and personal journey for Ramsay and McCandless, who first burst onto the Canadian music scene in 2007 with their eponymous debut album, which included stunning first single "Swing Your Heartache." Following extensive touring across North America and Europe that saw Young Galaxy play alongside acts like Metric, The Frames, Peter, Bjorn and John, Death Cab For Cutie, and Stars, touring members of the band returned to various other concerns, leaving only bassist Stephen Kamp alongside Ramsay and McCandless.

McGill music grad Max Henry has since joined the Young Galaxy fold on keys and guitar, and drummer James Lynn rounds out the band's live lineup. While Ramsay and McCandless continue to write most of Young Galaxy's material, both Kamp and Henry are now permanent additions to the band who contributed creatively to the new album (Kamp added vocals and keys, while Henry co-wrote the track "Pathos" and arranged strings on two songs).

Ramsay and McCandless' move to Montreal from Vancouver several years ago also played a large part in the couple's music, from taking inspiration from peers in the scene such as Arcade Fire and The Dears, to recording at two of the city's best-known studios, Hotel 2 Tango (founded by Arcade Fire producer Howard Bilerman) and Breakglass Studio (home to The Besnard Lakes).

The ten indelible tracks on *Invisible Republic* were recorded over several months in 2008 whenever the band was able to book time at both studios. Having made their first album entirely in the studio, the band decided to take a different approach for the new record, hoping to capture a fresh, live sound without extensive editing or studio trickery. They began working with engineer and studio co-owner Radwan Mounneh at Hotel 2 Tango, then completed sessions at Breakglass with Besnard Lakes frontman Jace Lasek (who also helped helm their debut).

"We wanted to be sure we could do it in a way that allowed us to hear what we felt when playing together," McCandless explains. "It needed to sound like the chemistry we were feeling in the previous year of touring and in

the collaboration of writing the songs. So this meant we asked a lot of Radwan and Jace. Doing things this way made the whole recording process more constructive; we were still shaping sounds when it came to rough mixes, and so the initial creation of the songs felt like more of a process.”

Invisible Republic also features a constellation of guest turns, including former touring members Liam O’Neill (drums, guitars, vocals) and Stephen Durand (guitars, vocals), Besnard Lakes vocalist Olga Goreas, plus a string section featuring violinist Joshua Zubot.

Invisible Republic showcases a band that has fully come into its own -- there’s a new urgency in McCandless’ rococo vocals, bolstered by Ramsay’s swirling melodies. And though their songs often contrast the pain of heartache with the idealism of hopeful dreams, the pair reveals their own unfailing bond through the yin and yang of their music, from their note-perfect harmonies to their complementary lyrics.

Just as a republic is all about the public’s participation in the state, the songs on *Invisible Republic* offer up Ramsay and McCandless’ take on our current state of affairs – for Young Galaxy, the political is personal, and vice-versa, from “Disposable Times,” a wary look at where the human race is heading, to searing closer “Firestruck,” which builds from a hushed intimacy into an epic emotional maelstrom.

“The record is a reflection of the need for hope towards our future and an articulation of the kind of perspective we were looking to sustain in our lives, despite the inevitable hurdles,” Ramsay says. “We like to think we are making emotional music, first and foremost. We’re just looking to strike a chord in listeners’ minds.”

“We don’t try to say anything hip, really, or hide anything we feel inspired about for the sake of appearing more detached,” McCandless adds. “More hope than heavy, though! I think that in writing about what is meaningful to us, that combination of looking seriously at the world and our actions in it, combined with feeling totally in love with so much about life and music and each other, helps our lyrics carry that hopefulness innately.”

The record’s overall sound also reflects the band’s outlook, from the shimmering synths of lead track “Long Live the Fallen World” to the propulsive rhythms of hit-single-in-waiting “Oh Sister.”

“The first record was very muted and internal in a way – a bit of a bedroom album,” Ramsay adds. “We wanted to make this record more extroverted and 'awake'-sounding. Plus, we were listening to a lot more rhythm-based stuff when we were making it; we put more emphasis on the drums and grooves. I like hypnotic, dance-y music – things like early New Order and Can were being referenced a lot. We wanted more urgency overall and less sweetness.”

Light and dark, connection and loneliness, doubt and optimism – *Invisible Republic* is the sound of our collective hearts beating in tandem, through both good times and bad. They may be a Young Galaxy yet, but they sing out with an ageless wisdom and tunefulness that bears close listening.

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