

Sing-Sing breaks out with lilting electropop

Emma Anderson wasn't sure what her musical life might become after her Brit pop quartet, Lush, disbanded in 1998. After close to a decade together, Lush drummer Chris Acland committed suicide, and the band called it quits.

"When Lush finished, I was sort of having to decide what to do," said Anderson, during a phone interview from Seattle. "I did take some time off. I continued writing songs, not really having a master plan."

Then came a chance meeting with Lisa O'Neill. Their then-boyfriends happened to be roommates. The women first met at a London flat. But the subject of music didn't come up right away. A mutual friend later suggested O'Neill might be just the singer Anderson had been looking for.

It turned out O'Neill had done the vocals on a hidden track by Locust, also known as Mark Van Hoen. Anderson already owned and adored the disc. So, before making the phone call, she dug out the *Morning Light* and gave it another listen. Soon after, Anderson and O'Neill met up sans boyfriends and Sing-Sing was born.

"I think I knew I didn't want to sound like a guitar, indie band," said Anderson. "I had done that for eight years."

Because Lisa had already worked with Van Hoen, he was a natural fit as producer on what would be the duo's debut, *The Joy of Sing-Sing*.

The record first appeared on Alan McGee's Popstones label in the U.K. This autumn, Manifesto Records unleashed it on North America. The CD includes a shimmering video for its first single, *Feels Like Summer*.

"I still write songs the old way," noted Anderson. "The sound and arrangements were what I wanted to change. Mark used programs and samples. It was a completely new approach."

Songwriting is split 50-50 between both women. Anderson described her style as "kicked out of the air." Melodies just sort of show up while she's walking down the street, she said. She isn't the sort to sit down and decide it's time to write a song.

On *The Joy of Sing-Sing*, Anderson and O'Neill traipse into that free-spirited, ethereal territory. Songs like *Everything, Me and My Friend* and *Panda Eyes* sink in right away, thanks to O'Neill's engaging and sometimes haunting vocals. Plenty of synthesizer and a mix of string instruments like violin and cello give the record a fresh pop appeal. Hear it live when Sing-Sing hits town.

Now touring the States, Anderson said she's glad to be back. "When I was in Lush, we toured a lot in America."

Her part is bound to draw instant interest in Sing-Sing's direction and Anderson has already encountered comparisons to her former band.



Hear Lisa O'Neill and Emma Anderson 'sing-sing' Friday, Oct. 25 at the Magic Stick.

IN THE CD PLAYER

As you slide in a copy of *The Joy of Sing-Sing*, you might be wondering "What are Sing-Sing listening to?"

Emma Anderson, guitar: Nora Jones
Lisa O'Neill, vocals: Dolly Parton

One particular review noted that *The Joy of Sing-Sing* is not *Lovelife*, the full-length 4AD swan song Lush released in 1996. And of course, she wondered, why would it be?

"I suppose they can't really help it," Anderson said, admitting frustration. "This is something in its own light."

Now it's time to prove Sing-Sing on its own merits. Judging by just one record, Anderson and O'Neill sound like they're off to a promising start.

Don't miss the subtle beauty of Sing-Sing, with openers *Venus Hum*, 9 p.m. Friday, Oct. 25, The Magic Stick, 4120 Woodward Ave. Detroit. Tickets cost \$10 advance, \$12 at the door for this all ages show. Call (313) 833-9700 or check www.majesticdetroit.com.

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