

SPOTLIGHT



Andrew Strapp

TOKYO POLICE CLUB

A new creative focus raises the bar for the seasoned indie rockers

Graham Wright, David Monks, Josh Hook, Greg Alsop

YOU CAN TELL A LOT ABOUT AN indie rock band by how they spend the Monday following South by Southwest (SXSW). The young and crazy ones nurse hangovers and search “removing burrito stains” on Google. The annual Austin festival is about excess—lots of showcases fueled by lots of beer and Mexican food—and it’s easy for “buzz groups” to get burned out.

Fortunately, Tokyo Police Club are no longer hungry hype magnets, and after SXSW, keyboardist Graham Wright doesn’t sound any the worse for wear. In fact, he describes their Texas outing as “the world’s most luxuriously short SXSW trip,” he says. “We were busy, but we were strategically busy, whereas in the past we said yes to everything.”

Formed in Ontario, Canada, in 2005, Tokyo Police Club was one of many indie bands that surfaced in the wake of the

Strokes, and between 2008 and 2011, they released three albums, toured with Weezer and Foster the People, and played all the major festivals.

Going into their latest album, *Forcefield*, the foursome “wanted to improve everything in a big way,” says Wright. Putting business concerns aside and focusing on creativity, the Club spent some three years crafting the record. Produced by singer and bassist David Monks along with Doug Boehm (*Girls, Dr. Dog*), it’s nine songs of punchy optimism—a reminder of what happens when guys with guitars bash out three-minute tunes loaded with hooks. It’s a classic back-to-basics record, but as Wright says, it didn’t start out that way. Initially, there was talk of hiring a DJ or hip-hop producer to give the band an electronic edge.

“A lot of bands went that way in the past couple of years, and I don’t know if we

were reacting to them, or if all of us were reacting to the same other inspirations,” Wright says. “But had we done that, the hypothetical result is something that’s a lot more in line with what’s trendy right now. I don’t think that’s a very good look. I don’t think that fits Tokyo Police Club that well.”

The turning point came when they cut “Argentina,” the three-part album opener whose nearly nine-minute running length is deceptive. It’s straight-up rock, “a whole lot of pop music in one place,” as Wright says, and it paved the way for similarly hooky standouts “Hot Tonight” and “Miserable.”

“The whole process of making this record was like being dragged from one excitement to the next,” Wright says. “The new excitement would supersede the old excitement, and we had to keep working to catch that excitement.”

—Kenneth Partridge

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