

They Only Come Out At Night

Uh Huh Her's sophomore effort *Nocturnes* sees daylight

BY RYAN J. PRADO

It's been said, mainly by entertainment publicists, that there's no such thing as bad press. And while that remains a relative observation—excluding, of course, someone's obituary—the fact remains that well-timed salacious dalliances, transgressions or wardrobe malfunctions in public can prompt a firestorm of social interest far quicker and with more zest than an emailed press release. Electro-rock duo Uh Huh Her—Camila Grey, 32, and Leisha Hailey, 40 (yes, Alice from *The L Word*)—are, for better or for worse, now highly aware of this infallible PR rule.

Less than a month after they were booted off a Southwest Airlines flight for betraying the company's "family-friendly" scripture—they were kissing (gasp!), and were subsequently revealed to be a couple—Uh Huh Her's sophomore album *Nocturnes* is finally seeing the light of day, three years after the group's debut, *Common Reaction*. It'd be somewhat sad if the timing of their tryst were the only reason for the group's newfound notoriety. Luckily, it's not.

Nocturnes, released October 11 on the band's own label Plaid Records, bubbles with synth-bass warbles, vivid homage to the bleaker bits of the New Wave oeuvre (think Joy Division or the Eurythmics) and danceable moments of brooding pop just melodic enough to lull you into a false sense of security before dropping the full extent of its gloom. It's the classic symbiosis of a dark foundation given a radio-ready facelift, and it's immediately alluring.

For Grey (pictured, left), the grim outlook was an easy source to create from, culling as she was from the time during the band's split from Nettwerk Records just as their debut LP *Common Reaction* was released in 2008. The bitter taste transferred over to the songwriting for *Nocturnes*.

"We went on a firing spree and got rid of ev-



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erything old, and wanted a fresh start," explains Grey. "After an experience like that, it's trying on you emotionally. We wanted to go back to the basics like, 'Why do you make music?'"

The duo opted to take its time in recording a new batch of material, renting a studio in Van Nuys, Calif. and laying down the foundation for what was to become *Nocturnes* over the next seven months. Following the initial recordings, the album sat while Grey and Hailey mulled over how they were going to go about releasing their new music. In the meantime, they decided to hand the recordings over for a bit of collaborative production work by friend Wendy Melvoin, who worked most famously with Prince and the Revolution. What came next was a totally new take on the record Uh Huh Her had been making in the previous months.

"I can get stuck into my own little dreamy, synth-pop world," ruminates Grey. "I'm super pragmatic and I very rarely go outside my own little box. When we brought Wendy in, she

challenged me. She brought this really crazy, left-of-center element that I'm not used to, which I loved in the end. Both of our brains ended up working really well together."

Upon release, *Nocturnes* topped iTunes' Top 10 Electronic albums list, providing an interesting read from Grey, who insists she was trying to make a rock record.

"I was going for this super '70s, Pink Floyd, big wall-of-sound kind of thing," explains Grey. "When [*Nocturnes*] was #1 on the electronic charts, I was like, 'This is a rock record.' I don't know who gets to name everything on iTunes. I think it takes a more organic rock approach than any of the other stuff we've ever done. We wanted to be a little grittier than normal—less polished, a little more raw. That's how we were feeling from all the crap that was going on."

However you slice it, the album is garnering near universal praise. Uh Huh Her is headlining the first ever Keep A Breast Tour, zigzagging the continental United States and

Canada to promote awareness and education of breast cancer. The tour benefits the Keep A Breast Foundation, with volunteers from the organization handing out informational pamphlets, pink ribbons, necklaces, bracelets and more. The ladies begin each of their performances on this tour by bringing a breast cancer survivor on stage to share their story with the audience.

"It's an important thing for young people to hear, and a cool way to do it through music," says Grey. Both her grandmothers survived breast cancer.

Beyond the Keep A Breast Tour, Uh Huh Her hopes to tour Europe before heading back to the States to do more supplemental touring for *Nocturnes*. With all that time together, Grey and Hailey, it would seem, have likely not let the unwelcome spotlight of the Southwest debacle thwart their camaraderie (journalists are instructed not to ask about the incident by the group's tour publicist). In fact, as Grey reports, the couple's offstage balance seems to translate into the creative process as well.

"The way I see Leisha is that she's a bunny and I'm a bear," giggles Grey. "She's super light and energetic and really positive, and I'm kind of this broody... I tend to go dark. She really tries to bring out the sweet, light side of me. I don't know what it is, but from day one when we got together and started writing, it was so easy. It wasn't ever challenging. It's not like a Fleetwood Mac kind of thing; there are no huge fights. We complement each other really well." ☐

The Keep A Breast Tour makes its final stop in Portland Sun., Nov. 6 at the Wonder Ballroom, 128 NE Russell. Jarrod Gorbel opens; 8 p.m. (doors at 7:30); \$15 in advance, \$17 day of show; 21+; wonderballroom.com.

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