



ELLIOTT FROMM, CAMERON LISTER AND DYLAN CAMPBELL OF PLUTO THE PLANET

INDIE PLANET

Eugene's rising indie-pop darlings get serious

After establishing a local following at University of Oregon house shows and small venues, Eugene indie-pop trio Pluto the Planet decided to take the summer off to regroup and plan their next steps.

"We wanted to scale back on shows," guitarist Cameron Lister tells *EW*. "We've played so many shows in the past few months, we didn't want to saturate the community."

On Aug. 14, Pluto the Planet returns playing the In the Valley Below (see "New Rock Series" this issue) after-show in Hi-Fi Music Hall's Encore Lounge.

Lister says the band hopes to play more shows out of town. "We want to take things to the next level," Lister continues, "but do it the right way," acknowledging that most indie bands barely break even on tour. But Lister suggests that doesn't need to be the case. "There are smarter ways of doing it."

Pluto the Planet bassist Dylan Campbell seconds that notion. "We want to make sure it would be worth our while," he says, "be ready to go out there and do it."

Campbell continues: "For instance, we know now that if we were to plan a tour to, say, California, we could get the shows. However, we would be lucky if the payout for the shows even came close to covering the expense of gas. We have the idea that if we had some help in terms of the booking process that it would make the tour a lot more worthwhile."

Pluto the Planet is made up of native Eugeneans, UO students and childhood friends. "I've known Elliott [Fromm, drums, guitar and keyboard] since I was 3," Campbell explains. "I've known Cameron since I was 11."

Campbell, Fromm and Lister grew up loving music, learning instruments in school or from family members. "My dad played guitar when he was in college," Lister explains, adding that his father "always had guitars lying around the house."

"I dinked around with him, he showed me some chords," Lister says, "and then I started taking lessons." He admits with a smile, "I originally wanted to be a drummer."

Fromm says he realized he wanted to be musician when, as a boy, he spotted a red Fender Stratocaster hanging in the

window of a music store. "My hands are on the window," Fromm recalls. "My face is glued to the window, I'm like, 'Mom — I want to play that!'"

"My dad was always a drummer in a band," Campbell says. "My family's always been very musical. I think it was kind of inevitable for me to get into music somehow." Campbell says that, once the three band members met as children, it wasn't long before they began dreaming of life as a band.

After cycling through several lineup changes, Pluto the Planet settled on a being a three piece, with Fromm on percussion. "It was really interesting at the time," Campbell continues. "I thought of Elliott as such a good guitar player. I didn't want to waste all that potential on something he was just figuring out."

Fromm played drums a bit in school but is mostly a self-taught percussionist.

Listen to what is likely Pluto the Planet's most well-known tune, "Gregg's Place," and hear bouncy, infectious rhythms with mild elements of African highlife music — particularly in Lister's bright, chiming and melodic guitar work.

The band agrees that the timeless South African music compilation *The Indestructible Beat of Soweto* has been massively influential on their "indie-world pop" sound. The musicians also reference inspirations like surf rock, Paul Simon, New Order, Talking Heads and Vampire Weekend.

"Ezra Koenig [Vampire Weekend frontman] — great guitarist, great lyricist," Campbell says. Fromm says he also appreciates Vampire Weekend's focus on compositional elements and song craft.

"When we started 'acting like a band,'" Campbell says, "we were listening to The Shins, Vampire Weekend — a lot of 2008 to 2013 indie bands. You'll definitely hear the indie-rock vibe."

Campbell says trios constantly strive for a full sound, calling it a "really awesome challenge." But it didn't take long for the band to find their formula. "We have Cameron and Elliott switching between guitar and drums on a lot of songs," Campbell says, "keyboards as well. I usually play the bass pretty much for the entire set."

"It's an interesting multi-instrumental dynamic that we try to bring to the table to keep it entertaining live," Campbell adds. "It's kind of cool to see all these people rotating around these instruments."

"In the last year and a half it's become a lot more professional," Campbell concludes. "A lot more well put together, more thought out."

"We've received a lot of positive feedback that people are liking that," Lister adds. ■

Pluto the Planet plays 10 pm Friday, Aug. 14, at Hi-Fi Music Hall's Encore Lounge; FREE. All ages.



INDIE GLOOM

The Bangles called Monday "Manic" and Morrissey called Sunday "silent and grey." Which day of the week do San Diego's power-punk duo **Gloomspan** find the gloomiest?

"Every day so far is Gloomspan," Lori Sokolowski, Gloomspan drummer and back-up vocalist, tells *EW*. She concedes that her gloomiest day is "Sunday night when the fun's over and you have to go back to real life."

The San Diego duo returns to Eugene, playing its brand of hard-hitting, punk-inspired indie rock.

"The inspiration for the music we've been doing for the past couple years is anything along the lines of Black Sabbath to B-52s," says Justin Cota, guitarist and lead vocalist. "A lot of Sonic Youth, Queens of the Stone Age," he continues. "It's a very stripped-down, high-energy sound — catchy riffs."

"Justin comes from a metal and heavier music background," Sokolowski adds. "I kind of come from an indie, *Riot Grrl* background — more of a punk a sound."

Another undeniable influence on Gloomspan is the '50s via The Cramps. Gloomspan track "We Don't Know" features a surf-rock riff and an infectious "woo-woo!" Cota plays with abandon; Sokolowski plays like a tantrum — together they sound like an FM radio that isn't tuned in quite right.

Gloomspan play with Eugene's **The Shifts** and **WarHall**, 8 pm Thursday, Aug. 6, at Wandering Goat; \$5. 21-plus. — *William Kennedy*