

3939 N. Mississippi Ave. Portland, OR

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Bar Bar open 7 days / 11:00am - 2:00am Serving Lunch / to-go orders 503.288.3895x2

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Happy Hour 4pm-6pm 7 days All shows are 21+, Doors 8pm / Show 9pm, unless otherwise noted

Minors allowed in Bar Bar until 8pm

MUSIC



VIET CONG TUESDAY, MARCH 3

When the going got tough, Matt Flegel just got noisier. When Calgary-based noise-pop band Women split up in 2012, it wasn't without controversy. Led by brothers Matt and Patrick Flegel, the band had carved out a niche as one of the most innovative and fiery gui-

tar acts around, but an onstage fight between the brothers—and the sudden death of guitar player Christopher Reimer—led Matt Flegel back to his roots: messing around in his basement with old friend Scott Munro.

"When we first started recording together, we didn't really have any intentions of being a band or playing shows or anything like that," Flegel says. "Sometimes you want to avoid having too many cooks in the kitchen."

The early demos were so promising, though, that the duo decided to flesh out the project, recruiting guitarist Daniel Christiansen and former Women drummer Mike Wallace to join them as Viet Cong. Armed with a seven-song, tour-only tape (later officially released under the title, appropriately, *Cassette*), the band embarked on a grueling winter tour, honing its dark, combustible sound at dinky dives across North America.

It turns out *Cassette* was more a harbinger than a sharp veer to the left. *Viet Cong*, the band's official debut, has a serious industrial bent, from the distorted, stomping percussion that opens "Newspaper Spoons" to the blissful, frantic rave-up "Silhouettes," which sounds a bit like the best song Interpol never released. Mostly written in the band's garage studio space, a good chunk of the record was recorded live, with a few overdubs and happy accidents to make things weird. "We got to try out all sorts of synthesizers we'd never seen or played before," Flegel says.

If Viet Cong does resemble Women, it's mostly in mood—and the piercing, stabbing blasts of guitar noise. But *Viet Cong* isn't just a continuation of the past. It's a seismic shift to the stale fabric of post-punk, simultaneously referencing the greats (there's just a bit of Joy Division in the droning keyboards and ghostly vocals) while also sounding alien. Every song on *Viet Cong* is locked in a different dungeon maze, and the guys spend each track trying to find a different way out. "March of Progress" is the expansive centerpiece, a simmering six-minute juggernaut that builds from a steady pulse to a knockout punch in its final section, when the guitars part the clouds, shooting rays of jagged noise in every direction. "What is the difference between love and hate?" Flegel asks, repeatedly, as the guitars and interlocking beat surround him like a cyclone.

Asked what Viet Cong has planned next, Flegel mentions the band has about half of a new album written and would like to hit the studio this summer, if inspiration strikes. Don't expect a total reinvention of the wheel, though.

"We're not making a ska record just yet," Flegel jokes. "After a year of touring and checking out pawn shops in weird cities and finding new instruments, we're mostly looking to push things forward." MICHAEL MANNHEIMER.

SEE IT: Viet Cong plays Mississippi Studios, 3939 N Mississippi Ave., with Freak Heat Waves and Aan, on Tuesday, March 3. 9 pm. \$10 advance, \$12 day of show. 21+.

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MON, MAR 9

\$12 ADV