

Elevator 10

CABLE

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ELEVATOR WELCOMES LUCID GAMES



Elevator is pleased to welcome Lucid Games to its ranks, the games company formed from the ashes of esteemed Liverpool developers Bizarre Creations.

With titles such as 'Geometry Wars', the 'Project Gotham Racing' series, and most recently 'Blur' and 'James Bond 007: Blood Stone' behind them, the staff at Lucid have been responsible for creating pioneering products over the last 10 years across action, arcade and racing genres.

Moving into their new offices on the 5th floor of 31 Parliament Street, Elevator are pleased to welcome the BAFTA winning staff to the building. And it would seem they are just as excited to be here, writing "New bar, cool bike shop, diverse creatives and a view of Liverpool. We can't wait to move in to Elevator Studios" on their Facebook page.

Pete Wallace, managing director of the studio said: "With the great history of Bizarre behind us, we are proud to be part of Lucid and are committed to the UK game development community.

"We plan to build a studio which encourages open communication with its partners, customers and other developers."

The studio is currently talking to several publishers regarding potential projects, and beginning the process of building a world class team of artists, designers and programmers to build innovative products.

Steve Smith, Digital Industry Director at Liverpool Vision, the city's economic development company, said: "Liverpool Vision has been keen to keep what is some of the best games talent in the global games market in Liverpool and from day one we have been very supportive of this initiative.

"This world class talent combined with a very credible and experienced management team, we believe offers the best future for a sustainable and viable business within the significant Liverpool gaming sector."

For more information, go to: <http://www.lucidgames.co.uk/>

MILES GETS HIS MOJO BACK

It's been quite the year for Miles Kane. The Elevator resident, whose debut album 'Colour Of The Trap' reached number 11 in the UK charts earlier this year, narrowly missed out on the 'Best Breakthrough Act' gong after being nominated at this year's Mojo Awards.

The 'Inhaler' singer, who previously won the same award back in 2008 with Mercury-nominated outfit The Last Shadow Puppets, faced stiff competition from the likes of The Vaccines, with Rumer winning the category.

Kane, who recently completed a series of dates with Liam Gallagher's Beady Eye and Arctic Monkeys, has also been well-received at solo shows at Glastonbury and the iTunes Festival. A live release of his iTunes performance at the Roundhouse in London is now available to buy online.

For more information, go to: <http://www.mileskane.com/>

REBEL PLAY'S LEO NEEDS PRIZES FOR CHILDREN'S CHARITY

Having close links to children's charity Claire House, Leo Cubbin, from Elevator-based games company Rebel Play, needs help from the building's bursting roster of bands to provide money can't buy prizes.

"My friend Tracey and her brother and sister are organising a fundraiser for Claire House in an empty barn on the Wirral on September 3rd this year," explains Leo. "Claire House was named after their sister, Claire, who sadly died in July 1989, just before her 10th birthday, so they have a very special link to the charity. They are thinking along the lines of an alternative barn dance! Think Hog roast and bucking bronco but with a modern band and ABSOLUTELY NO line dancing!"

"It strikes me that we have some amazing bands in Elevator who may just be happy to help out somehow. They are looking for ideas, raffle prizes and 'money can't buy' prizes such as a meet and greet at a gig to raise money for the charity."

Claire House is a 10-bed hospice for children and young people with life limiting and life-threatening conditions.

If you have any ideas for raffle prizes, for the event itself or if you could provide one of the prizes that can't be got by cold, hard cash, then get in touch with Leo to let him know how you can lend your support.

Either pop in and see him on the 4th floor in 25 Parliament Street (room 4.6), email via leo@rebelplay.com, or call on 0151 709 235.

WORDS WITH...SMILING WOLF

Interviewing Elevator-based Smiling Wolf is a lot like having a boyfriend in MI5. There are a lot of truly exciting projects and contracts waiting in the wings that are not allowed to be mentioned, but therein lays the attraction. With a client-list which oozes edgy, the company, helmed by Creative Director Simon Rhodes, are about to venture into uncharted waters with their upcoming ventures.

Smiling Wolf celebrated their 10th birthday earlier this year. Having worked with everyone from Ian Brown to the National Museums, what have been the highlights from their long and illustrious list of contracts? "Weirdly enough, one of the best contracts we won was to design Roxy Music's first ever website," smiles Rhodes. "I'm a big fan. It was going to be an archival website stretching back to their beginnings. It was really visual too, looking back at all the artwork and the all the various paraphernalia, but then the band didn't release an album so it had to be left there which was a disappointment."

Are the projects completed for those in the public eye more exciting than those for on the more corporate end of the spectrum? "We don't really deal directly with the bands, you deal with the record company and they're just as corporate as the next guy. It just depends on how much fun that corporation wants to have," he explains. "Sometimes record labels are twats, you imagine a project is going to be fun, really exciting and creative, but they just want to do a really hard sell without any creativity."

"We would like to do more music industry work, they're trying to learn to market things in a different way, which we can help with, but we've done a lot less music stuff in the past few years than we have done for a long time because of the financial downturn."

"These days, you've got to be flexible and offer a broad range of services" he asserts. "Smiling Wolf have ridden the recession well because we understand digital platforms and social media as well as brands. It's fairly unusual for an agency to do cover everything right through to digital, websites and animation. I don't think that many agencies do that."

"Arts organisations are finding new ways to fund things. We're rebranding Fact at the moment, they've been a client of ours since day one. There is money for arts projects there, everything is just a little bit leaner. The Biennial have just commissioned us to do their new website, it will definitely change the way that they're viewed online. Hopefully by the summer the new website will be up and running."

To stay ahead of the game, has the past decade been spent honing new skills and technologies? "Smiling Wolf have done digital as well as brand from day one," explains Rhodes. "You learn all the time as a company and as an individual. You're always exploring new elements of the design sphere and you have to keep learning and bringing that knowledge back to the company."

"We do thoughtful and well considered work, but it's creative at the same time. It's well-crafted but strategically right for the client as well, it's not just about prettifying something."

Rhodes is a familiar face within the BalticTriangle having taken an active role in the area's regeneration. Why is its success so important to him? "I think it's a lot more exciting than the other city-centre areas, I like the grit and I like the escape from the super-glossy which Liverpool does quite well, especially in terms of venues and bars. There isn't that much here on the ground right now. It wouldn't surprise you if you bumped into David Bowie going into a studio in the BalticTriangle, you wouldn't find him in the other parts of Liverpool."

"There's a concentration here of people that you'd want to rub shoulders with. There isn't anywhere else in Liverpool that does that. The broad range of filmmakers, musicians, writers and journalists in this area is amazing. It's great fun and there's better banter, it's really exciting and rich."

Upcoming projects they are allowed to talk about include a commission with a film production company. "We're doing an international film-based project called '94 Elements', in which a series of films have been commissioned about the naturally occurring elements in the periodic table. There will be a website where the films will all live, it'll look fantastic." They have also been commissioned to undertake a complete rebranding of DaDaFest and create a new website for Ellis Williams Architects.

The most exciting project comes in the form of an invention they've been working on which has recently

Fighting Talk: Smiling Wolf reckon they can beat anyone in the building at table football since they got their own table.

been given funding from the Technology Strategy Board. "It's a music discovery product that we've invented, a tool that makes finding out about music you like very visual," he explains. "If you like a band and want to know all about them, the way music discovery tools work at the moment is that they'll give you an algorithm. You nearly always disagree with the results and find yourself going round in circles; you 'discover' the same things. Our model is a bit different, more like a rock family tree. Looking at it, you understand that you might like a particular David Bowie album because of the producer, and through that you find out the reason you like Mott The Hoople was because they used the same producer. That's a different connection that never comes up in current music discovery tools. You can see the genus of something, it's really visual. If you go on Wikipedia, it's pretty dull, you just scroll down and don't make that visual connection. Imagine being able to see an artist with their releases connected to other record releases via their artwork. It's really exciting."

Taking design innovation to a new level, Smiling Wolf undoubtedly make the world a more visually-pleasing place, but also a more exciting one through their lack of complacency. Using their ten years of experience and bolstering it with a constantly expanding list of skills, the company don't wait for clients to come to them, they simply invent things we never knew we needed.

As for the projects we're not allowed to mention, if we told you, we'd have to kill you...

For more information, go to: <http://www.smilingwolf.co.uk>

Xander and the Peace Pirates have their photo taken in black and white.



INTRODUCING...XANDER AND THE PEACE PIRATES

Xander And The Peace Pirates seem to stumble upon new ways to get themselves noticed daily. While many bands are content to let their music do the talking and wait for the deal to find them, the Elevator-based band are utilizing every method within their grasp to get themselves on the global radar and it's working. The last few months have seen the five-piece nominated for five awards, play to over 40,000 people, reach number 1 in the MySpace chart and watch their internet fan-base more than double. Not bad for a group who, incredibly, are still unsigned.

There's a difference between arrogance and self-belief and the band's success is a testament to the latter. Notoriously hard-working, Keith Xander (guitar and vocals), brother Stuart (rhythm guitar), John Bird (bass and vocals), Chris Howard (keyboards/percussion) and drummer Jake Woodward are beginning to see the fruits of their labour, 2011 appear to be the year that their toil gets the recognition it deserves.

Dancing between rock, blues, funk and everything in between, debut album, '11', provides the soundtrack to the band's whirlwind year. After completing a tour of Ireland, the band were chosen to support Bon Jovi at the Lancashire Cricket Ground as the winners of Real Radio's Battle Of The Bands competition.

"I'm a huge Bon Jovi fan," explains Howard. "Half of my family were already going to the gig before we knew there was a competition, after we won, I was like 'Yeah, I'll see you there!'"

"It was insane, I jumped into the crowd," laughs Bird. "It was a big playground for us!"

The coup drew attention from the BBC, blogs and newspapers across the country, but it was the performance itself which created the most buzz. "When we got it, BBC news got involved and put the story out," explains Bird. "After the gig, we woke up in the morning and already 200 new people had added themselves to our Facebook page. Every five minutes there was a comment. We didn't have a YouTube channel until a few days after Bon Jovi, it's already had two and a half thousand hits in just three weeks."

The brothers Xander have been playing together under various guises for years. After enlisting the help of Bird after seeing him play with another band, and being introduced to Woodward via his dad, Howard's move to Liverpool just six months ago cemented the current line-up.

The band have a residency at the world-famous Cavern Pub on a Sunday, and have recently taken on another at Rubber Soul. Covers mix with original material to create a set which has seen the Cavern packed to bursting until closing every week. "We do covers, but every gig we do we throw in 5 or 6 of our original songs," explains Bird. The Cavern's been a great help. We play for three hours and you get people from all over the world. There are at least 30 people who come every Sunday."

With a set list so varied in its influences, what is the band's writing process like? "Keith and Stu have been writing for years," explains Bird. "Originally I was just recording bass on their stuff. I started writing and we started collaborating. Chris is a bit younger so he writes a bit closer to how I do. They write things in a soulful, classic rock style, I'm more emotional rock. Now we all write together."

"The best songs we write happen when we're all in a room together, jamming. Usually, it's music first and lyrics second. We have a song that we're working on at the moment and I don't even have a chorus for it yet. The song is finished structurally, it's all there, but the lyrics come last for me."

"Our album is mixed, there's no constant genre. The first track is rocky-bluesy, it's got funk influences, the second song is Kings Of Leon pop/rock, there's even a rap with a guy from LA. I tried to do it with my Irish accent but it didn't really work! Other tracks are just pure blues. People seem to like it all!"

"More recently we've stepped up our game," Howard states.

"We're currently writing a new album," adds Bird. "We have five songs down already."

"We're focusing more on a specific sound with this one," asserts Howard. We want it to be more coherent."

And the path the more coherent sound will go down? "ROCK!" laughs Bird.

"It's got a lot heavier," adds Howard, "though there's no screaming or anything!"

"The reason we're leaning more towards a rockier sound is because we've seen what people enjoy," says Bird. "We won't change who we are, but if we're great at rock and OK at blues then we're going to do rock."

And with a nomination for 'Best Rock Song' in the Exposure Music Awards, along with four other nominations including 'Best Album' and 'Best Song', it would seem that the Peace Pirates are definitely doing something right.

"We entered into all these categories in the Exposure Awards. We've gone hell for leather on entering competitions; it's the best way to get into these high-profile gigs. Just one of these competitions can generate thousands of fans. In the Benacasim competition, we finished third out of thousands of bands. We had by far the biggest following but we ended up coming third on a technicality because our fans didn't play the video to the end. But even though we didn't win, it was great for us as it increased our online presence. A few weeks later, I got an email from MySpace saying that one of our tracks, 'I'm No Good', had reached number one in the unsigned chart, and number 97 globally. We're getting noticed online, and we're being watched by labels. This year has been brilliant."

"Everything we've done, we've done it all ourselves," says Bird. "Every show, the CD's, everything, we've had no help."

But as the year rolls on and the band's profile continues to soar, we can only conclude that Xander And The Peace Pirates won't be doing everything on their own for much longer.

For more information go to www.myspace.com/xanderandthepeacepirates

INTRODUCING...KRAV MAGA

Combining elements of street-fighting, boxing and wrestling, Krav Maga may not be the most beautiful of all self-defence techniques, but by golly, is it effective. Efficient and brutal, the combat system has been employed by IDF Special Forces Units and various law enforcement and intelligence organizations. Having now been developed for use by the public, we meet up with top-level instructor Adrian Siman at the Elevator-based Krav Maga Liverpool to find out more about its virtues...

"I have been doing martial arts since I was young," explains Siman. "In my early teens I studied Japanese Martial Arts. This was followed by 6 years of kick boxing. When I moved to Portugal I discovered Krav Maga and have now been practicing for 8 years, and under intensive instruction from the IKMF I have reached G5 level.

"I tried Krav Maga and loved the simplicity and effectiveness of it," he explains. "I wanted to learn more. The techniques are based on your body's own natural movements and reflexes which really helps with the speed you can learn it. There's no awkward, long-winded and fancy looking moves."

And in laymen's terms, what is Krav Maga? "It means 'contact combat' in Hebrew," says Siman. "It is a proven system of close-quarter self defence. It was developed and originated in Israel. The system has been tried and tested in many real life situations and is the official close-quarter combat of Israel's Armed Forces and many SWAT, Law Enforcement and Military units all over the world.

"Now, the system has been developed and adapted appropriately for use in everyday life as a self-defence system. Krav Maga is becoming very popular all over the world. It is easy to learn, practical and extremely effective as self defence for women and men alike

What separates Krav Maga from the martial arts? "It's not an ancient martial art. Martial arts have theories, set rules and rather complicated sequences to learn," he explains. "It can take two to five years just to become competent, and who has the time? And yes, they are an art-form. Krav Maga is partly martial (meaning military) but definitely not artistic, it's quite the opposite. It's not pretty, there are no rules, it's quick and really effective."

And why bring the discipline to Liverpool? "I was teaching in London and realised that there was a demand for Krav Maga in Liverpool and Manchester as there were no other instructors in this area," Siman explains. "I travel every week between Liverpool, London, Wilmslow and Manchester to hold classes. Our students come from all walks of life but the majority are just like you; secretaries, nurses, doctors, graduates, young mothers, Electricians, teachers, programmers, executives. They come in all shapes, sizes and all levels of fitness."

Do people use the classes to get fit? "Absolutely," he says. "Everyone leaves my classes sweating and feel like they have done a physical work out. Plus they learn something that may save their life in the future. You are as disciplined

as other arts but you can learn new techniques every week unlike martial arts where you practice the same move week in week out."

And how much effort do you need to put in to be the best at Krav Maga? "You need to come to classes regularly and practice all the time. You learn quickly as there is no theory, we teach only what works! We have gradings from P1 to P5 for students (practitioners). You can grade roughly every 6 months to 1 year."

What is the 'Close Quarters Battle' and how is it different from normal training? "CQB is about more than different types of punches, kicks, stabs and slashes," explains Siman. "It's the ultimate self-defence training. Tactics and strategy will come into your training as you advance. Questions about how to use the terrain to your advantage, how to recognize an opponent's weakness, how to be aware of what's happening around you and how to defend yourself against multiple attackers are all different situations that students may be taught how to deal with at more advanced levels.

Krav Maga Liverpool will offer classes for women, does the training differ? "Because threats faced by women differ to those faced by men, our programme teaches you how to defend against common chokes, grabs, bear-hugs and other attacks," says Siman. "These include fighting from the ground and what to do when confronted with weapons. You learn to be aware of potential dangers and avoidance. The program incorporates training methods to build women's fighting spirit and to train how to respond both mentally as well as physically and eliminating freezing in confrontation. It's the same stuff the guys learn, but no guys."

Are there competitions locally? "We do not have competitions in Krav Maga," says Siman, "only gradings. This is because there are no rules in Krav Maga."

Under 16's Krav Maga Classes begin in the Autumn, students will be taught age-related Krav Maga : the basic movements, punches, kicks, defence against common holds and attacks, and how to prevent and deal with all the relevant dangers. "But it's not just physical," explains Siman. "The class is designed to educate without scaremongering. It makes sure the student understands potential dangers and how situations could escalate. I deal with prevention. The student will then learn when it is appropriate to use the techniques, emphasising non-violent solutions."

Also on offer is the 'Touring and Training in Transylvania' experience. The training is based around the training centre in the town of Bran, located not far from Dracula's Castle. Students can expect intensive training for four to five hours a day for three days, in a regular gym environment together with other locations such as water and night training, urban self-defence, outdoor training and more.

We all like to think that we could handle ourselves should a situation present itself, but Krav Maga gives us all the opportunity to make it a certainty. Whether you do it for fun or self-defence, one thing is for certain, nobody's going to jump you when they see you walk out of a Krav Maga class.

For more information, go to: <http://www.kravmaga-system.co.uk/>



Be Warned. These men are doing more than just shaking hands.



It's great to see a band that actually looks like A BAND.

INTRODUCING...THE BENDAL INTERLUDE

As a rule, when bands wax lyrical about everything being 'about the music', you know you're on a bum steer. The first sniff off success is often enough to make said act douse their material in enough radio-friendly and crowd-rousing clichés it would make Kings Of Leon blush. Not so with Elevator stoner-metal ensemble The Bendal Interlude. When former outfit Blades Of Unity started to cause a stir in London, unhappy with the direction the music was taking, the group was disbanded in favour of then side-project The Bendal Interlude.

"Blades Of Unity started off as a joke but got signed to Rucktion Records," laughs guitarist Stuart Taylor.

"It took off even though it was a joke," adds drummer Dave Archer. "We were doing Bendal at the same time, we decided we'd rather drink beer and have a laugh instead of things being so intense all the time."

"We weren't playing our own instruments," explains Taylor. "The guitarist was playing drums, Dave was playing bass. We were playing this ridiculous hardcore music and it was doing well, but it wasn't really our thing. We wanted to be playing our own instruments, what was supposed to be a joke got far too serious."

"The Bendal sound is bluesier, more southern, stoner-rock," says Dave. "It's less aggressive and more jokey in a different way, never quite as serious as a metal band. A lot of metal bands are all about wearing black, darkness and doom, but Bendal are a bit tongue-in-cheek. It's a ridiculous type of music when you think about it so it seems a bit silly to take it dead seriously."

The pair have been playing together for about 15 years, having first formed a band together aged just 12. Joined in Bendal by vocalist Nat Gavin and bassist Tommy Lloyd, the group send each other material to learn before getting together for rehearsal.

"We're together more than everyone else as Nat lives down south," explains Taylor. "Me and Dave get together and write most of it, Tommy sometimes comes in and writes with us and then we send stuff to Nat. He comes up for rehearsal, we get dead pissed and get it done, that's how we seem to work best!"

While bands with a more commercial sound will find it easier to snatch up high-profile support slots to raise their own profile, genres which lean more towards the more extreme end of the spectrum often find their hometown's offering a little stale. "It's a certain type of music and a certain type of scene as well," says Taylor. "It's difficult to break out of that scene. We play a lot more in London doing our own headline shows than here, which is weird when you think about it."

"For a while there was nothing going on in Liverpool," adds Archer. "For some reason in the past six months there just seems to be a lot more bands, more people for us to play with who are doing a similar type of thing. Before, there was just us, we'd meet up with people over the internet and go and play shows with them, so it's

a lot nicer now to be able to relax before a show and not to worry about travelling.

"We're playing soon with a band called Iron Witch. They seem to be collaborating with other bands quite a bit, going away and doing shows with other people, which is great. The scene's getting better."

Though the live circuit may be improving, the band find the Liverpool nightlife has taken a turn for the worst with the closure of many venues over the past few years. "A few years ago it seemed like there were quite a few more nights for different types of music," says Archer. "It's gone a lot smaller now."

"It's to do with the venues," explains Taylor. "There used to be loads of other places like Heaven And Hell and Bar Fresa, we used to do a night there, Crack Zombie, which was always really good. There aren't as many regular nights anymore."

"We all like different types of music, now there are just nights with singular genre of music, like a 'metal night'," says Archer. "We used to put on all different types of extreme music which attracted different types of people with different mindframes to the show. Hopefully that will change."

The band, who received rave reviews in Metal Hammer for their Sonisphere appearance, recorded an eponymous EP with Hot Club de Paris' Paul Rafferty earlier this year. The feedback has been more than promising. "It's been really good, we got some great reviews," says Taylor. "We got a few offers for people to put it out, but none of them has really suited us at the moment."

"We sent out one to Ed Hartwell, who's mixed The Prodigy, Jamiroquai and all these weird bands," says Archer. He got back in touch wanting to get involved and remix us. He was interested in a heavier sound. It will be interesting to see what he'll do with it."

Do the band have any plans to enter the studio again soon? "We've got a quite a few more tunes to record," says Archer. "Ideally we wanted to record a full album, to take all the best tunes off past records and put them all onto one record with the new material, it'd be good to get them all sounding the same instead of so disjointed."

While Bendal's approach may be laid-back and blithe, their sound is anything but. Tongue-in-cheek sludge collides with injurious musicianship to create the sound which has seen them heralded by their peers and made the national music press take notice. Imagine what they could do if they got to rehearse every week...

The Bendal Interlude play the Zanzibar on August 4th.

For more information, go to: <http://thebendalinterlude.bandcamp.com/>