

NEWS



The Loud having a stand in the dark

THE LOUD RELEASE 'HARRIS SHUTTER'

Garage-glam three-piece The Loud have been enjoying praise for their debut mini-album 'Harris Shutter', released via Payper Tiger last month.

The release party was held at a secret warehouse party near The Picket, and featured sets from Warm Brains, Tsar Bomba (the Bicycle Thieves new incarnation), By The Sea, Gallops, and a Clinic DJ set.

Since then the band have been picked up by the likes of Steve Lamacq, who invited the band down to Maida Vale to record a session for his show. The band's single 'Amy's Gonna Get You' was also featured in the NME as one of their top ten downloads of the week.

For more information, go to: www.theloud.co.uk



Ladytron take a well-deserved break after recording their 5th album

LADYTRON RELEASE FIFTH STUDIO ALBUM

Ladytron have released their fifth studio album 'Gravity The Seducer'. The album is the band's second release of the year, following on from their 'Best Of' compilation released in March.

"The title is a lyric from the track '90 Degrees,' which comes towards the end of the album, and is one of the most definitive moments in terms of the album's overall feel," says Daniel Hunt.

"Gravity The Seducer is more of a jump than the last album was, more ethereal & melodic, a touch more abstract in places than we've gone before, baroque 'n' roll. It was a pleasure to make, took us right through last summer. It's our best record in my opinion," continues Hunt.

Ladytron recorded the album in Kent with co-producer Barny Barnicott (Arctic Monkeys, Kasabian, Editors).

For more information, go to: www.ladytron.com

ELEVATOR WELCOMES VASCO DA GAMMA AND DAVID KELLY DRUM TUITION TO THE BUILDING

Elevator welcomes the extremely talented Vasco Da Gama to Parliament Street. The math-rock upstarts will release their debut EP, recorded with Hot Club de Paris' Paul Rafferty next month. The band will launch the self-titled recording at the Static Gallery on October 1st, with acts such as Dire Wolfe, Voo and Loved Ones also appearing on the bill.

David Kelly, who drums in the band, also offers drum tuition. With 15-years of drumming experience, and a style lauded by fellow drummers, he is now holding one-on-one lessons in their Elevator studio, as well as Chester Music School.

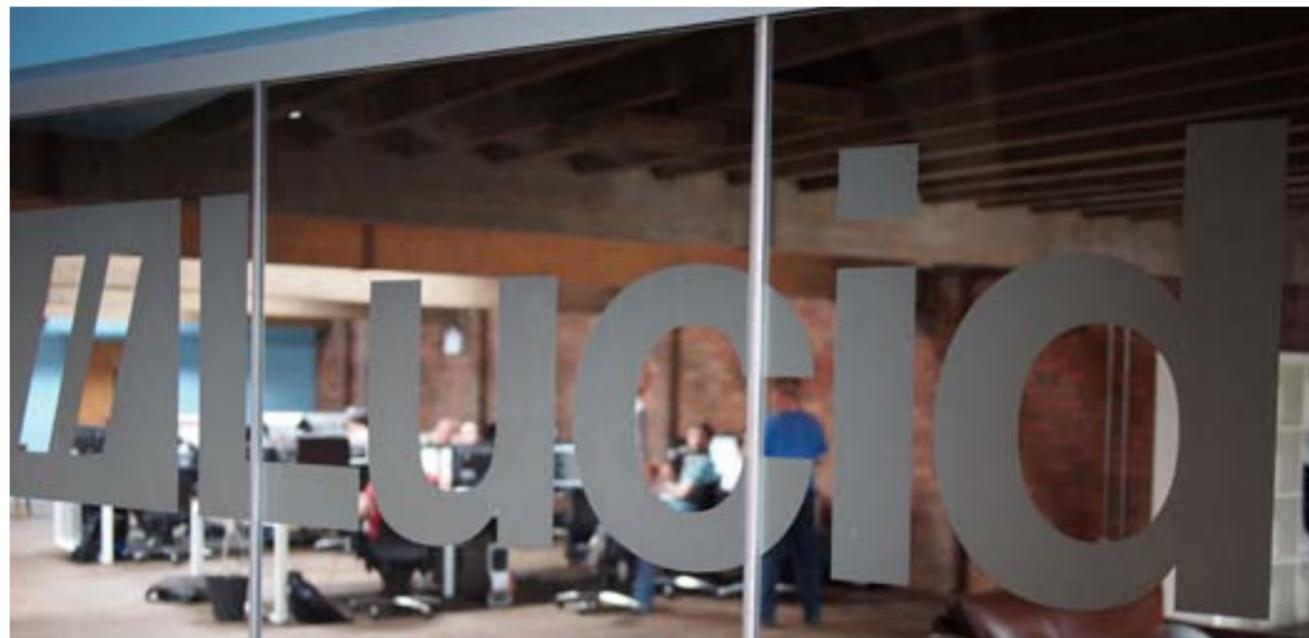
"Currently I teach a wide range of ages and abilities at Chester Music School," says David. "I am passionate about each pupil achieving his or her personal aims with their drumming, whether that be to play confidently in a rock band, to play more complex styles such as Jazz or Latin, or to learn to read drum music. The main aim of each lesson however is not only to learn but also to have fun."

Kelly reached the top ten of drumchannel.com's John Wackerman drum audition. The competition was open to contestants worldwide and judged by an all star panel of drummers.

For more information on Vasco Da Gama, go to: www.vascodagama.bandcamp.com

Please email davidkellydrums@hotmail.co.uk or call 07825519320 for more information or to book your first lesson.

INTRODUCING...LUCID GAMES



When Liverpool gaming studio Bizarre Creations closed its doors for the last time in 2010, it made headlines across the globe. For 20 years, Bizarre created remarkable, thoughtful and attention grabbing games such as Project Gotham, James Bond: Blood Stone and Geometry Wars. Home to more than 200 gaming experts, the news of the closure instantly saw job offers fly in from across the globe, with other studios trying to snare the world-renowned creative talent suddenly up for grabs.

While that could have been the happy ending many in the industry were expecting, for the former Bizarre veterans, playing it safe wasn't on the cards. For many, moving abroad wasn't a choice, and with a decided lack of game development positions in the city there was really only one option, to make some.

"We were quite a highly-renowned studio," explains Mick Davidson, Production Manager at Lucid Games. "A lot of companies moved to Canada for tax breaks, and many of us were being approached for jobs abroad, but not all of us wanted to move away."

"Our hand was forced," says Craig Hamilton (Creative Director). "We had to decide whether to go and find another big company or whether we wanted to take the more creative route."

"A lot of the people were from the city and there were people who weren't, from Brazil and the Netherlands, who loved it here, but there's not a huge amount of games jobs in the city so we thought 'why don't we create some?'" laughs Pete Lawson, studio head at Lucid.

"There are lots of things you can do in a big company, even more so when you have a large market share, but there's a lot of things that you can't do easily," says Davidson.

"We wanted to make things that are really innovative and stand out," explains Hamilton.

"When you're making a big-budget game it's all about demographics and getting the right market, there's little risk-taking or IP (intellectual property) that comes out of these companies," says Lawson. "The fact we're no longer with Bizarre means that

we can take more risks. A lot of us had been there for 10 to 15 years, creatively this has allowed us to bloom a little bit. Everybody's an expert and it's really freeing. It's a hard time to get investment, we're doing a start up at the worst time, but it's gone pretty well."

"We thought 'let's just build on good ideas,'" explains Davidson. "We came up with over 20 new game ideas, developed them and some have been picked up by people. This wasn't something we could do at Bizarre, you're so focussed on delivering what you're currently working on, there were incredibly tough deadlines and some projects were deemed to be too small. We have a team of 15 people, this means we can focus on projects that are a whole range of sizes."

"We're more free now. We're confident because we're experts, and because we haven't got this huge amount of investment money to take all the risk out of," says Lawson. "There's no real big egos in it either, we're much more open to everybody's ideas."

"It's a bit like a hippie commune," laughs Davidson.

"We just want to support creative ideas," asserts Hamilton.

And how far does an idea have to be developed before they bring it to the team? "We get ideas to about ten pages of artwork; how it could look, a decent summery, how the game will flow, and costing," explains Lawson. "Once you've got those figures in place you can go to the publisher. Because we're pretty experienced, we don't need to go with a prototype."

"Also they'll see you in the first place," cuts in Davidson. "It must be nigh on impossible for a guy off the street to get seen by publishers, it's wrong but that's how it works."

Work has already begun on the creative masterminds' ideas, and all eyes are on Lucid to see what they set out their stall with. But like the rest of the world, Lucid are remaining tight lipped for now. "Because it's new IP, it's sensitive," says Lawson. "It's not that we're precious about it, it's all none disclosure stuff."

"People can expect news in the new year," smiles Davidson. "For us the most interesting thing is

how we started the company. We all sat down and discussed how much time we could commit without getting paid, that's the investment we put in."

"We said 3 months," laughs Lawson, "and now, eight months later...!"

"We got funding from Liverpool vision to go to GDC in San Francisco," explains Davidson. "We went over and we talked to a load of publishers and pitched game ideas, talked to them about what they were after for 2012-13. We got some good ideas. That was just two-weeks after the Bizarre closure."

After taking an office on Edge Lane, the group moved to an office near Lime Street. "We were crammed into one room," says Lawson. It was very testosterone heavy!"

"We were in Phil Redmond's office for a bit, laughs Davidson, "though we're not sure if he knows about that!"

"It was a learning experience," says Hamilton. "Though we've been doing it for 10 years we've learnt more about pitching in the last few weeks than the past decade. I'd say we've pretty much got it honed now."

Lawson agrees. "If you believe in an idea it's a lot easier to sell it," he says simply.

Now housed in Elevator, how are the studio finding their new home? "It just fits us," says Davidson. "We hope the area grows and many more businesses move in. We've already got a great relationship with MilkyTea downstairs, Basecamp, a few guys from Bizarre are working freelance in there, and Rebel play. We don't know that many musicians yet, but we can hear them!"

Though playing it safe may seem the most sensible thing to do while the economy finds its feet, it doesn't mean it won't keep you awake at night. While you might not have to worry about investments or the squeeze on publishing budgets, for the staff at Lucid, missing out on an opportunity to create without rules and boundaries would have given them more nightmares. Roll on the new year...

For more information go to: www.lucidgames.co.uk



INTRODUCING...MINION TV

Minion TV deal in sonorous, ambitious and rousing soundscapes, that and changing the city to better suit their talent. While most bands seem content to work within the boundaries their hometown has set for them, the Elevator-based five-piece take their gripes and do something about it.

With their music used for adverts, films and TV shows across the globe and a successful three-day mini-festival under their belts, Minion TV are one of the cities unsung heroes, but some people just don't do it for the fanfare...

"This version of Minion TV has been together for about three years, before that it was me and Justin recording music ourselves and looking for the rest of the band," explains guitarist Stephen Johnston. "We put an ad out for Simon and Barry. We've just been here since then recording in our room. We got a new bassist recently, called Andy (Crawford)."

"On every level, everyone who's joined the band has brought with them something new," says guitarist Justin Bailey.

"The sound grew once we were a full band," explains drummer Simon Monkhouse. "We'd never had a secure unit before, the same group of people practising week in and week out. We're just able to work on the sound and work out where we want it to be."

The band's fully-formed sound was showcased on their eponymous debut album last year. Evoking the enormity of their live sets, the album featured tracks like 'Robot Meets Girl' and 'Take One For The Rest Of Us'. The band have already begun work on the follow-up but have recently found their time taken up by other things...

"We've been doing so much other stuff like putting on our own shows, a festival and we're doing things that we didn't do before. We basically did an album, gigged it in Liverpool and just put it out there. This year, we're doing all the things you're supposed to do before you put an album out, like paying with other bands!"

"We've ended up in a great situation now,"

explains Bailey. "We've got a bigger pile of songs than we need for the album, so we can concentrate on other stuff."

"Now we're looking at how we want to do our album," says Johnston, "taking a look at what other bands do as we want to do something a little different."

So how do the band go about creating the sound which has seen them likened to the likes of Sigur Ross? "At the start I bring an idea in with a name and an identity and put it out to everyone," explains Johnston. "Someone might just start with a drum roll."

"It comes in as a single idea, and then you jam it and see how that goes. Some things work and some things don't. If something works then it will come together really quickly. It's usually a complete song by the end of the week. I can't think of songs which have taken months to write but I can think of songs that we've worked on for months that haven't worked."

And why have the band decided to record themselves? "I think it's more about possession and knowing exactly what you want to do," says Bailey. "If we ever found anyone who was really into what we do and totally understood our sound and ideas, they'd have to basically become the sixth member of the band. It's quite sensitive, especially with the kind of music that we play; the end sound is very important and can make or break a song."

The band's track 'Battleships' was used in a Lexus advert which was shown across Asia and Europe, a major coup for any artist, but even more so for a band currently unsigned. "Because our music is instrumental, it's easy to throw at sync opportunities," explains Johnston. "We did it with Sentic. We gave them our music and we got a call one day saying 'we want to put one of your tracks forward for an advert in Asia and Europe' and from there we got other sync opportunities, like working alongside some American film makers."

"It's a great feeling to be in that position and not be signed, to be honest," laughs Monkhouse.

"We've never really chased being signed; it's not really on our agenda," says Bailey. "In terms

of promotion, and getting on festival bills, it's a good thing, but it's not something we think about."

"To me, the Lexus ad was a bit of reassurance that we're making good music."

Not content with the support opportunities for bands of their ilk or the city's nightlife, the group started the 'New Path' night earlier this year. "We started by putting a night that put all the bands we like in one place," says Johnston. "There wasn't really an alternative music night that wasn't a random mix of bands. We wanted to create a night that we liked, that we could play at and we wouldn't feel out of place. A lot of bands similar to us have to support mainstream indie bands and they're not getting the right audience."

With the Matthew Street Festival looming ahead of them, the band decided to turn the night into a three-day event, a welcome alternative to proceedings, as part of the Matthew Street Fringe. Welcoming acts from as far afield as Japan, the bill reflected the band's efforts. "Because the Matthew Street festival was coming up I thought it would be good to get three nights of the New Path on at the same time, it's so people couldn't complain about the amount of cover bands. We thought we'd do our own thing."

"It was entirely successful; it was an oasis of calm. It was helped by the fact it was in Mello Mello, it lived up to its name," laughs Bailey. "Just 50-feet down the road it was chaos and mayhem."

"A Malaysian couple came up to me after the show saying that they'd just moved here but that they struggled to find places to hear live music that they felt comfortable," says Monkhouse. "They walked past, heard the music and came in. They came back the next night too."

New Path will continue as a monthly event to give the band more time to concentrate on recording. "We want to get something out before the end of the year and get another album out next year," says Johnston.

We can't wait to see what they come up with next...

For more information, go to: www.miniontv.co.uk



Flying high - Milky Tea's creation for a Lloyds TSB advertising campaign

Walking around Milky Tea's new studio is similar to walking around Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. It just looks fun. Each computer screen doubles as a portal into a startlingly detailed and lifelike world.

To the background of a tiny chef playing pinball, some extremely talented musical bugs and a dog in a hot air balloon, director Jonathan Holmes and his staff explain the ins and outs of 3D design. The miniature chef becomes temporarily bald. "You have to use real hair for 3D characters," Holmes explains, before moving on to the next station's wealth of creativity.

Formed in 2005, MilkyTea has an impressive client list. Recent clientele they're allowed to talk about include Clarks, Fairy, Bose, and Hasbro. Their work has won an Emmy, been nominated for BAFTA's and all the while retained a sense of individuality which attracts clients from across the globe.

"My background is in design," explains Jonathan. "I started off working for Unilever, designing products. I then got into making furniture for celebrities, now that was interesting! I can guarantee that money can't buy taste! I then became involved with designing bars and restaurants, working for the likes of Hilton, Pret a Manger and places like that. It's from these jobs that I became involved with 3D."

MilkyTea had been a sideline that he and a colleague had been working on for a year. When the company he was working for went bust in just 24 hours, Milky Tea became his main source of income. "I was in work on the Wednesday, due to be paid on the Thursday, my mortgage was coming out on the Friday and I had no savings. Milky Tea was born on a credit card over night. Our first client was Papa John's Pizzas.

"It took two years of absolute graft and next to no money to get it to be a profitable company. I was working seven days a week and 10-12 hour days at times. It took so much graft to get to this point. It was then that me and Ian decided that we

wanted to go our separate ways, I agreed to take MilkyTea into a different direction, more focussed towards advertising."

Fast forward 6 years and the studio have got one of the best client lists in the Northwest of England. "I'm not a sales person," explains Jonathan. "I'm creative and I'm good at design, I've just always tried to be myself, a lot of the work has come from word of mouth and referrals. We wouldn't get those contracts if we didn't put the work in. It's great to be getting calls from people like the marketing director of Clarks Shoes and him telling me that he's heard all about me and would love to work with us.

"People come to us when they want something a bit different. We're known for character work. Our art director is one of the best character designers around. We're a bit quirky, we have our own style."

Their work with LloydsTSB is probably one of their most instantly recognisable feats. "We helped evolve the world and grow it; we're the police of the TSB world! It's like 1940's Britain with a bit of a retro element. When we design things for that world it can't look like our world, but still needs to communicate.

"I'm not an animator but most of the team are. It's their job to design the characters and bring them to life. To find creatives to do what we do, it's not like a games company where you're a cog in a big machine, each artist will develop the character from beginning to end. The reason that I've done that is so that they feel pride in their creation and that they're responsible for all facets of the character. A MilkyTea employee needs a whole host of skills, and that's quite hard to find. I feel like a football scout at times! You go where the talent is. For a while, MilkyTea seemed like the United Nations!"

Last year saw their work on BBC Switch's The Well receive national plaudits. "We worked on The Well for BBC Switch, we did all the artwork in the game and the game design. The online game was really

successful and was nominated for a Bafta, an Emmy and won two BANF awards, which is pretty huge. We don't get the credibility we deserve. We're a service-based business but we want to make our own games and products, we want to feel ownership again. This year we're going to split the team into two entities, hopefully there'll be a games arm to MilkyTea, it might come under a new name but it's going to use the internal team here."

After a stint down south, Jonathan is now back in the city, energised and ready to take the company forward. "I've just come back to Liverpool after 18-months in London. 75% of all our clients are there. One of the reasons for me to go down there was to develop the business side of things. I'm a creative not a salesman so I've been very split doing a week here, then a week in London. It became too much. I got really attached to London, so I'm missing it a bit at the moment, but I'm here for the foreseeable future. I've got loads of plans for this place. Things just can't happen quickly enough, but you have to be patient. This year will be a bit crazy, but we've got such a good client list."

But no matter how much the company grows, he is keen to retain the quirky element of the business that has seen them win the contracts of so many companies. "MilkyTea is a creative boutique agency and when we grow we don't want to lose that, we don't want to lose the reason people come to us on the first place."

Looking around the office, with a mini-cinema set up on one side, a barrage of creativity taking place on the other, and Holmes still visibly excited about what they've achieved and all that's yet to come, it's hard to see how they would lose that spark. After witnessing the engaging and all-encompassing work they've completed for others, we're dying to see where their talent takes them when they're given completely free reign.

For more information, go to: www.milkytea.com



INTRODUCING... THE LIVERPOOL TOURISM APP

Having reached the dizzy heights of number 16 in the highly-competitive world travel app charts, the Liverpool Tourism Guide has been a long time in the making. The man behind the app, Larry Murphy, came up with the concept before the app store even existed.

Skip back to 2002, and Murphy was working as a civil servant. Titles such as park ranger, and roles in city centre and housing management had encouraged his love for the city's history and architecture and unbeknownst to him, paved the way for the tourism app that's taken the world by storm.

"I had the initial idea in 2002," he explains. "I used to do historical guided tours around the city's parks and was watching a historical slide show. I wondered at the time if there was some technology you could use to get that information out on a wider scale, but there was nothing at the time. I'd started writing about Liverpool city centre, about buildings, monuments and sculptures, just for myself. I thought 'that will come in handy one day' and it has!"

With the technology currently not invented, Murphy turned to the devices of the time to provide an outlet for his passion. "I did something on CD-ROM but it was just 100-odd locations, there wasn't that much in it," he explains. "Looking back on it, it wasn't something that you could market. That idea went out the window.

"I just waited and forgot about it. I'd taken pictures myself of all the things that were featured. They would have been useful, but when we finally did the app I had to re-do them because the places had changed so much! There's only a few of the original pictures left in it. The one of the Chinese Arch is the picture from 9 years ago."

Moving on from its earlier incarnation, the app provides relevant and useful tourist features as well as audio descriptions, explanations and history for over 180 points around the city. There's an augmented reality feature, a 'What's On' guide, and the ability to virtually explore Liverpool. Available in English and three other languages, the app is an interesting find for international tourists and curious locals alike.

"I've had to visit and take pictures of over 1250 locations of pubs, clubs, bars and restaurants, find the GPS locations of them for the mapping and ask what time they open and close. I started that in November 2010," smiles Larry. "I worked on it constantly. I'd get about 50 done a day. I was still working at the time and spent my holidays in the city centre getting information for the app." And how did he pick the places? "I simply picked every club, every bar and every restaurant," he laughs.

After seeing news stories about phone apps and just what they could do, in 2010, Murphy had found his platform.

Turning the idea into a marketable concept happened by chance, and via our very own Tim Speed. "I met Tim through my job; I used to sit on the same meetings as him for the Baltic Creative area. I had a chat with him one day. I explained that I had this great concept for an App but didn't know anyone who made them. He explained about Red Ninja (Elevator-based business) and set something up. It was like a meeting of minds. Prior to that, I only had the information on the history, at the meeting I was told that wouldn't sell on its own; it needed to be more useful to a tourist. We started off including things like taxi ranks; you can order a taxi straight away from the app."

Will the app evolve over time? "There'll be great offers available through the app, that's what I'm working on at the moment. You'll be able to see the best places at a discounted rate, have a great time and use the app for mapping your way around the city. It does everything. If you want to find out where your nearest bank is, it will show you where you are and take you to it.

And after years of working for the council, has the move to 'app creator' felt strange? "It's like a rollercoaster. It came out and I was up, then came down a bit and then other ideas will kick in and it'll go back up again. I worked for the city as a civil servant for 28 years, to leave it was a strange feeling. Once I got used to working with the team, it was like I'd never been there.

One of the last things Murphy did during his stint at the council was to apply for an award for the city's nightlife. "I submitted an application for an award for the night time economy of the city. I put

forward a 40-page document on what the city had to offer, about how it was inclusive, and it's got a great feel. We won an award called 'purple flag', signalling that you can have a great time in the city. That piece of work now gets sent around the country as the model that other submissions have to measure up to."

With more than 10,000 downloads to date, ranking higher than Laterooms.com, RAC and The National Trust, and with a four star rating it would seem the city has been crying out for such an invention. "This hasn't been done in this city," says Murphy. "I've written it all and taken all the pictures. It was available free during the Matthew Street Festival. I've tested it out on Spanish people and they're amazed by what we've done with it.

"If people want to personalise their business that's an option too. Base To Stay have sponsored us and they've personalised their page with their logo, room rates etc. We can do that with anyone who's on the app."

With what the app can do only limited by his own ideas, Larry is keen to point out another force that's gotten the project to where it stands today. "I've been married a long time and I still have a family to keep," explains Murphy. "I had to have her backing, if she didn't give me the go ahead to leave my job we couldn't have got it out in time."

Murphy's success goes to prove that no matter how good your idea, sometimes you just have to let technology catch up with you.

The app is available to download from iTunes now. For more information, email lmurphy@liverpooltourismguide.co.uk or info@redninja.co.uk



Larry and the Mayor pose for a photograph