

Punk Chic: The Second Coming of Brody Dalle

Written by Siobhan Rooney



Crushed between teenagers at Camden's Electric Ballroom, I was under no doubt that Spinnerette were far from another anonymous band. Being 5'4", this was not necessarily a good thing, but the combination of straight-up rock and roll and stage presence from one of music's coolest frontwomen soon put a stop to my bitching. In a world where Lily Allen has sold 260,000 plus records, clearly this offered some kind of panacea.

After discovering Spinnerette's rock credentials, my sister had informed me that City of Angels was her favourite song on the playlist at the sweaty basement rock club she frequents at university. The song: one of The Distillers' finest, and now former lead singer Brody Dalle is packing out venues with her new band. A supergroup of sorts, Spinnerette have been around for two years and feature the talents of another Distiller, Tony Bevilacqua, along with Red Hot Chilli Peppers founding member and Pearl Jam graduate Jack Irons, and Queens of The Stone Age's Alain Johannes on bass. Disappointingly, this illustrious line-up doesn't perform outside of the recording studio and so only Dalle and Bevilacqua were at the Electric Ballroom that night, accompanied by the touring version of the band.

Spinnerette's self-titled debut was released in June and while unlikely to satisfy Distillers fans' hunger for more spiky punk, there's a slick, melodic feel that isn't half bad. For starters, the record's bold, guitar-led sound seems designed to be played at large venues, channelling some of Irons' time with stadium rockers. Dalle's vocals conquer and complement, in big, sleazy A Prescription For Mankind, in singalong Distorting A Code and the fuzzy refrain of Rebellious Palpitations.

It's obvious that Dalle has grown up since the split of the band that made her name in 2007, having got hitched to QOTSA lead Josh Homme and given birth to her daughter; with what might be the demise of the twenty-something rock and roll lifestyle and the influence of new working partners who are true musicians in the eclectic, project-hopping sense of the word, it is inevitable that Spinnerette signals a new direction musically. Dalle is no one trick pony: just look at all her name changes.

So what did the lady herself have to say about all this?

You've all got pretty healthy musical resumes. How is Spinnerette different from everything you've done before? Are there elements you've borrowed from past projects?

It's very different from everything I've ever done. I've used riffs that I've had for years, and there's a lot of stuff left over from The Distillers like All Babes Are Wolves. But then a lot of things are pretty new...

Distorting a Code includes the lyric "the past entangles into everything I know". Did you vent any of your frustrations from the Distillers split in the record?

No, I wasn't really thinking about it. I'd pretty much grieved over it already as I'd never expected [the split] would happen. I never saw the Distillers ever breaking up so when it happened I was really shocked. But when I made the Spinnerette record, I was way over it and was actually happy that it had happened in hindsight.

Is it possible to be more commercial, more (arguably) accessible without selling out?

Of course. Just because it's melodic and poppy, it doesn't mean that everyone's going to like it.

Whose idea was it to feature a wine bottle as an instrument in Impaler?

That was Alain: he's a musical genius.

Any experiences surrounding the themes of the debut?

I can tell you a funny one. We recorded Impaler in a day and that night I was driving down through the Valley listening to it. It's about Vlad the Impaler. I came to a stop at a traffic light, looked over and there was a barbershop called Vlad's.

Has the new album helped changed preconceptions about the kind of music you make?

I hope so. Probably. I don't want any stigma attached. I think it's going to get a lot weirder: I love Captain Beefheart so I don't know, it could go in any direction.