

arts & entertainment

jale's debut SubPop album... Laura tells all

by James R. Covey

Halifax art-school rockers jale created something of a sensation last year by getting signed to the now-legendary Sub Pop record label. Since then, Jenny, Alyson, Laura, and Eve have played numerous venues in Canada and the northeastern U.S., filmed a video, and released seven-inch singles on four different labels. In January, the band recorded their first full-length album with producer Brad Wood (best known for producing Liz Phair's *Exile in Guyville*). Last week, they released the two-song *Cut*, their first vinyl for Sub Pop. Just before she left to join the band for the mixing of their album in Chicago, I spoke to bassist Laura Stein about recent and future developments with the band.

JC: Maybe we could talk first about recording the album. You did that back in January?

LS: Yep. Second week in January. We rented a house in East River, and brought up Brendan McGuire, who has a 24-track studio — it's portable — and he came in and set up in the living room, and set up the drums in the master bedroom, and our producer, Brad Wood, came up from Chicago. We did it all in the house for a week, and we had a really good time.

JC: So how many songs did you record?

LS: We completed twelve, and twelve are going to be on the album.

But our songs are really short + they're like a minute each, or something.

JC: This is gonna be, like, a slacker album.

LS: That's right. We don't have a long attention span, so...

JC: The TV generation...

LS: Exactly.

JC: Did you write one of the songs on the new single?

LS: Yeah, I wrote "3 Days".

JC: That's sort of a twisted blues or something.

LS: I don't really know what it is. It's the first one I've written, I haven't written any before. So I'm the late bloomer in the crowd, I guess.

JC: Who does most of the writing?

LS: The three others share it equally. Now that I'm ready to do it, it's gonna change things a bit — even out.

JC: Do you write a lot of different ways, or do you bring stuff that you've written by yourselves?

LS: Everyone has a different style. Some people have a really specific idea of how they want each part to sound, and sometimes they come in saying well, here's my guitar part, and here's the melody, do with it what you will — and that's the most fun for me.

JC: I guess the record's gotta be mixed — are you going down to Chicago for that?

LS: Yes, as a matter of fact we are. They're all actually down in New York now. I'm gonna fly to New York on Tuesday. We're going to drive to Chicago from there. I think the mix of it right now is really good — just a really rough basic mix. I don't know how much more we're gonna do. But we have a week in Chicago, so...

JC: A week of twiddling knobs.

LS: Yeah.

JC: Are you going to make another video, before the album comes out?

LS: Yeah we are, and we're trying to get Don McKellar to do it.

JC: Oh really!

LS: Mmm-hmm. And he's a good person. I haven't seen one of the films he did, called *Blue*. He's working on a bunch of different things write now. He co-wrote that Glenn Gould one.

JC: Right, and he was in *Highway 61*.

LS: And *Roadkill*.

JC: How might the music on the album sound different from what you've done before?

LS: The songwriting maybe is not so different, but I think the way we recorded it is different for us. Previously we've done a lot of mixing the vocals right into the mix. And now, so far, and I think we're going to keep this, the vocals are up front, but also really naked. There's not a lot of effects on it, which I really really like. I think there was always a problem because we didn't want to have vocals up front, mostly because, I think we had this idea that they would sound really glossy, and, you know, very overproduced... and

we kind of mixed the vocals in...

JC: Tried to avoid being Wilson Phillips or something...

LS: Yeah... We wanted something that was a bit more raw-sounding or something like that.

JC: So you felt it actually came together, cohesively... not just, like, a bunch of songs.

LS: Not just a bunch of random songs. I think the songs are different enough from each other to have an interesting mix, but at the same time there's a real sound to it.

JC: Was it Melody Maker that did a little review of the Sub Pop showcase in New York? That was back in November.

LS: Oh yes. Yup. Compared us to the Bangles...

JC: It was a positive review, though.

LS: Oh, it was very positive. He did another Melody Maker thing, actually

— last year's

East Coast Music Awards. I think he compared us to the Bangles then, too. I don't know what this Bangles obsession is about...

JC: It's kind of neat to see people working too hard for comparisons.

LS: Yeah.

JC: There seems to be two extremes of like, totally sweet pop,

when it comes to all-female bands, or like, Bikini Kill or something — riot



Laura Stein of jale

PHOTO: MIKE GRAHAM

grrls...

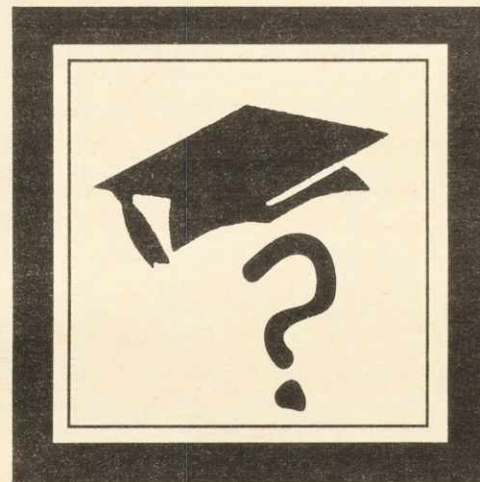
LS: Alyson and I were actually talking about that the other day, and kind of saying, we're not complete garage band, or completely punk — we're not riot grrls... We're kind of walking a line that a lot of other people haven't...

JC: A new kind of art school band. It's not Sonic Youth.

It's something new and different.

LS: And you can hum along!

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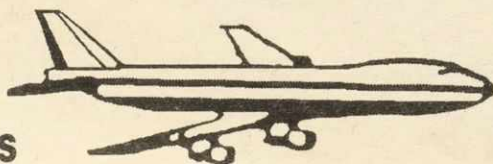
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