

Tending a talent

MUSIC INTERVIEW

José González

For a gently-spoken young man from an unobtrusive corner of Sweden, José González is proving a surprisingly divisive figure. To some, his break-out hit Heartbeats – aka that eerie ballad from the Sony Bravia ‘falling colours’ commercial – is nothing short of mesmerising. But many regard him as a dealer in saccharine dinner-party muzak – the songwriting equivalent of scented candles or expensive wind-chimes.

Inevitably, his detractors will point out that Heartbeats isn't even a González original – it's a cover of the electro pop group The Knife.

Because Heartbeats came to prominence on the back of a slick advertising campaign, González has, moreover, had to endure the occasional jeer of ‘sell out’. Did it bother him? At the time – maybe. But not anymore. ‘I wouldn't have given the song to a company of which I disapproved, say a fast food company or something,’ he says. ‘But I don't think anyone could have really objected to the product in question: it was a TV.’

In the two or so years since, González has toured the world at length and also somehow found time to write and record a second LP, the tender and lovely In Our Nature. ‘When it comes to songwriting, I am a bit of a perfectionist,’ says the singer, born in Gothenburg to émigré parents from Buenos Aires (as student



Southern discomfort: González admits to perfectionism with his songs

activists they had fled the Argentine Junta in the late 1970s). ‘It takes a long time to write a song. It is a very painstaking process.’

In the end, he came up with a rather singular solution to writer's block – he went on the road as guest vocalist of trip-hop outfit Zero 7. ‘It got me out of the studio,’ he says. ‘It allowed me to stop thinking about my own music all of the time. It was good to just go out there and perform. I was refreshed.’

Of all the tunes on In Our Nature, it's a cover of Massive Attack's

Teardrop that has garnered the greatest attention. It's just the latest pop staple which González has tackled – he has also re-interpreted tunes by Kylie Minogue and, er, Bronski Beat. The challenge, he says, was to bring his own twist to the track whilst staying true to the underlying sensibility: ‘It's such a simple song yet, ironically, that's why it's so difficult to get right.’

Eamon de Paor

Tonight, The Academy, 57 Abbey Street Middle D1, 7.30pm, €30. Tel: (01) 877 9999. www.jose-gonzalez.com



Night vision: Part of Sven Johne's A Walk In Lusatia – an infra-red photographic study of an East German village where wolves were alleged to have savaged an entire flock of sheep

ART REVIEW

Flight Of The Dodo

★★★★☆

The distinct whiff of dystopia emanates from Project's group art show Flight Of The Dodo. Exploring themes of evolution, escapism and mythology, it conjures a sense of foreboding.

The highlight is Sven Johne's A Walk In Lusatia (12 To 17 June, 2006) – five photographic diptychs taken with an infra-red camera. The project began after the artist read a newspaper clipping from 2003 about the alleged return of wolves to a village in East Germany where an entire flock of sheep had been savaged. No evidence of wolves was ever found, so Johne ventured out with a night-view camera and instead discovered abandoned settlements, defunct industrial estates and, bizarrely, a faux Wild West village. They're eerie, cinematic and beautiful; the green tinge and grainy resolution almost painterly.

Douglas White's Crow's Stove is a pleasing monstrosity of shredded car tyres lunging out of a cabinet like a post-apocalyptic palm tree, and Irene Kopelman's Monster – a two-headed plaster relief – references colonisation. Eoin McHugh

continues to disturb domestic environments, his three watercolours marrying incongruous architecture and interior design.

I found the audio recording blaring from Tom Braden's nautical installation – episodes from CBS Radio Adventure Theatre about ‘murderous scoundrels’ – an intrusion on the other exhibits. Titled I Spend My Evenings Sitting By The Fireside Hunting Tigers, it's a strangely static nod to marine exploration; the Oriental rugs, desk and a bookcase crammed with 1950s boys-own publications do little to supplement Braden's snapshot which suggests Tom Crean by way of Swiss Family Robinson.

Francis Uprichard's rigur mortis Sloth is bittersweet, but Martino Gamper's reconstituted wooden seats were a bit tenuous. I wasn't sure if they were supposed to be even used, their chair backs uncomfortably erect like antennae or horns – stuffed animals of sorts. As such, I wasn't compelled to read cover-to-cover Ryan Gander's storybooks (The Boy Who Always Looked Up) that were placed formally atop them.

Lucy White

Until Aug 23, Project Arts Centre, 39 East Essex Street D2, Mon to Sat 11am to 6pm, free. Tel: (01) 881 9613. www.project.ie

BOOKING NOW

Stereolab

In the wrong hands, mixing up Rive Gauche chansons with Eastern European film scores and Krautrock with Motown rhythms could go horribly awry. But with Stereolab at the helm of such an exotic melting pot, mellifluous results are guaranteed. The London-based post-rockers have been quietly pursuing their craft for more than 15 years and in turn have cultivated a loyal following. Tragedy struck in 2004, however, when vocalist Mary Hansen died in a freak accident (a truck knocked her off her bicycle), but if moving on is anyone's catchphrase, it's Stereolab's. Their forthcoming tour rides on the back of single Chemical Chords to be released later this month.

Dec 13, TriPod, Harcourt Street D2, 7.30pm, €25. Tel: 0818 719 300. www.stereolab.co.uk



THE HOTTEST TICKETS IN TOWN

We have two pairs of tickets to see **STEREOLAB** Dec 13, TriPod, 7.30pm

For a chance to win, e-mail your answer to the simple question below to life@metroireland.ie by noon today with ‘Hot Tickets’ in the subject line. With the answer, please include your name and a number where you can be

contacted between 1pm and 3pm. Entrants must be over 18. Strictly one entry per person.

Q. What was the utterly butterfly title of Stereolab's 2004 album?

A Margarine Eclipse
B I Can't Believe It's Not Button Moon

The winner of Friday's tickets to see Primal Scream is: **Ruth Elliffe**



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