

Posted December 5th, 2011

Yawn: Neon-Soaked Visuals Inject Energy into Electro-Pop Aesthetic

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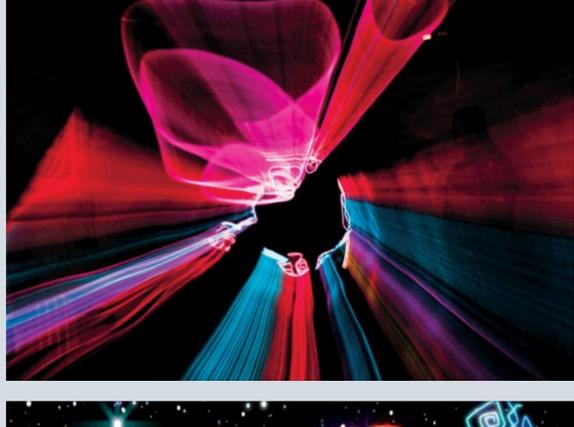
Yawn: *Open Season* (FeelTrip / Englophile, 8/30/2011)

Yawn: "Acid"

"Yawning opens up the spirit core," says the mustachioed faux-Zen master in Yawn's public-access-style video for "Kind of Guy." He continues in a satisfied, new-age lilt, urging viewers to "just give into the trance" before a strobe of rainbow-colored waves washes over the screen and the scene

shifts to outer space. Glowing dancers, whose patterned figures are outlined by neon tubes, float, gyrate, and play instruments in unison with a tribal beat as kaleidoscopic lights pulsate.

The video is a perfect representation of **Yawn's** aesthetic sensibilities — slightly off-kilter, totally saturated, and completely fun. "Colors are essentially just musical tones vibrating at a frequency that is visible to us," says the video's director, known only as **Druid Beat**. "Colors are another note to play." The concept for the video stemmed from the playful mood of the song, yet there is an underlying progression taking place amid the flashing lights and bouncing rhythm. "The two dancers in the corners are composed of simple shapes; they are pure light, pure energy," says Druid. "The middle dancers are more complex, lower entities, but still not pure matter. They combine into the human in the middle. From pure energy — light — comes matter." Meanwhile, the members of Yawn oversee the procession, and the viewer is reborn through a "glowing, gloopy, neon vagina...witness to a light-show nirvana made out of the laser gods," the director says.



Despite the brief existence of the band, Yawn's avant-pop jams have garnered a considerable amount of buzz. Prior to becoming Yawn, the Chicago-based quartet performed and recorded under the name **Metrovox**, wielding an aggressive, guitar-driven setup. When asked where the new name and direction came from, multi-instrumentalist/vocalist **Adam Gil** explains, "We were just throwing names around. I forgot who came up with it. It doesn't really sound like a genre or anything — or a type of music. So we can constantly change and Yawn would be a fitting name for what we do."

The five-song EP that followed is a meditation in layers, a game of tricking the listener to make it sound bigger than it really is. "Kind of Guy," which features lyrics about bassist **Sam Wolf's** late cat, dangles playful harmonies over a smattering of reverberated shower-curtain pulls, drum-rim clicks, and chopstick key jabs. Avoiding the potential cacophony, the track exudes chilled-out vibes, as African wind instruments weave about the rhythm. And "Empress," Yawn's darkest song, shakes out the last bits of the band's Metrovox days with an assertive guitar push and an explosion of bright, sweeping synth lines.



As a relatively new band, Yawn is still establishing its style, musically and visually. The video for "Kind of Guy" is a bold aesthetic statement, one that sets the tone for future visuals. And because it was a jumping-off point, a great deal of work went into its creation. "There was a very conscious effort to actually build as many of the elements as possible," Druid Beat says. "The [light tents] were actually as tall as people. The band's costumes were constructed using a lot of EL wire. We hand-soldered all of it ourselves. The glowing element on the dancers' costumes was created using mason's twine and black light."



David Beltran, who goes by the name of **Starfoxxx**, created the artwork for Yawn's EP, which shares the vibrant visual aesthetic of the "Kind of Guy" video. A young, sickly girl is illustrated in reds, purples, and yellows in a scrawled, notebook-margin style, complete with faux paint drips and bubble graffiti letters. It's a slightly more refined style than the band's mix-tape cover, which is a frenzied collage of disparate elements.

On this cover, alongside drawings of a "huge red shark" and "motherfuckin' Starfoxxx," is a monolithic blender. Besides evoking the obvious implications of a "mix," it serves as a visual metaphor for the band's own style, which blends the organic with the digital effortlessly, as drum machines and rain sticks keep time in polyrhythmic coexistence. And with an acute sense of melody and pop-song convention, Yawn makes its signature blend with ingredients and influences from **The Avalanches**, **Ariel Pink**, and **Brian Eno**.



With its sophomore single, "Acid," Yawn hints at another transformation, from happy psych to impending darkness. Stretched out in minor keys, the song echoes the heavy angst of **Pink Floyd** and displays shades of **MGMT's** path — from *Oracular Spectacular* ecstacy to *Congratulations* freak-out. However, the end attraction still bubbles with some seriously liberating hypnotic pop.

The band's full-length record, due in the first quarter of 2011, "[is] very much like a mix tape," sampler/guitarist **Daniel Perzan** says. "Some tracks touch on the sampling nature of The Avalanches and **Tough Alliance**-style beach sounds, and others are mostly organic that ride drums with synths and guitars. It's come to be a mishmash of song writing that really isn't like the typical album that keeps to one idea — which we fear may not exactly be the best thing. But that's kind of what we are as a band."

With a vague, elegant name and an equally since sound, the band is poised to do just about anything. And although much has changed since Yawn's high-school days as Metrovox, its creativity and DIY passion have remained constant. The Zen master would be pleased; by "giving into the trance," Yawn is just beginning to realize its potential.