

OVER THE ATLANTIC

By Erika Clarke

Overachievers can be a bummer. Why? To put it simply, it's because they remind the rest of us just how lazy we are.



Adding to the dilemma is Bevan Smith, who is not only one-half of New Zealand's guitar/laptop duo *Over the Atlantic*, but also manages to run an independent label (Involve Records), compose soundtracks (*Touching the Void*), front another band (Skallander) and create material for electronically inclined solo projects under various monikers (Aspen, Signer). And he does it all with an 'aw shucks' mentality. "I don't do balancing so well. I mostly just blast away at one project till I finish or get bored and then cycle onto the next project/band," he says. "I'm also in bands with very driven people and that helps me be more organized and focused."

One of those driven people is band mate and fellow Kiwi Nik Brinkman, who joined forces with Smith to release their debut, *Junica*, an album that often evokes touches of My Bloody Valentine, a smidge of New Order and a whole lot of something else that would be too foolish to try to begin to categorize. What connects it all are lush vocal harmonies and Smith's warm and immediate production, something not always captured in bands with a laptop component and something which is definitely not lost on Brinkman. "To be honest, I have no background in electronic music," he confesses. "My history has always been playing in indie rock bands. Most of the album is based around vocals and we consciously used lots of guitars for layering ideas. The record may sound a lot less clinical and cold when compared to other electronic albums." "My production goal is always warmth and clarity," adds Smith, "no matter if I'm working with rock, jazz or electronica. It still just really comes down to both personal taste and mixing skills."

Even though the two men come from disparate musical backgrounds, their union has been a tremendous learning experience. "The collaboration between Bevan and I has been good in that I have been able to learn heaps about programming and processing sounds," says Brinkman. For Smith, it made him re-investigate how he makes music as a whole. "*Junica* was an exercise on when to stop working on something. It's always harder when working with other people because I tend to set my standards higher for myself and it can take a long time before I think things are sounding good. I was also trying to make simple pop music."

Now with the recording process over, they are taking what they have learned on the road and are thrilled to hit the U.S. "I can't wait to visit Seattle, New York, Los Angeles," enthuses a giddy Smith. "Jeez, everywhere is awesome!" Even in jest, the duo have lofty post-tour goals according to Brinkman, "We are currently in the process of starting up an airline company called *Over the Atlantic* that will offer commercial flights up to the Earth's orbit. We guarantee it will change everyone's perspective on life." "The airline will use revolutionary solar powered planes," interjects Smith, "to reduce greenhouse gas emissions!" And of course the duo's music will be constantly playing in the cabin. Hey, you never know; they might not even be kidding. 