

Xylos

by Daniel Taveras
Photos by Tom Sands



In a city fed well on creativity, Brooklyn has birthed yet another child. Its newest progeny, Xylos, offers a vintage, charged look at pop with blended vocals reminiscent of Fleetwood Mac at their least troubled. The tunes present an elevating composite of synth and beaming melodies that showcase the better side of New York's summer months. Songs like the spacey "Mission" display guitarist Eric Zeiler's stark, bright sound as well as drummer Chris Berry's steady, dancey rhythms. Monika Heidemann's soft yet cutting delivery, and Nikki Lancy's pacifying synth harken back to a glossier decade, and the band's approach is no less serious than clever. With a fresh self-titled debut, Xylos prepares to abduct even more listeners with its infectious full-toothed grin.

Daniel Taveras: How did the band come about?

Xylos: Eric wrote and recorded an EP of his songs in his bedroom, asking some friends to come play/sing on it. From there he decided to form a band. The new full length is collectively written by Eric, Monika and Nikki.

DT: Your debut record hits on April 5th, how has your sound evolved since becoming a band?

X: Having 3 writers in the band and Monika becoming the lead singer has changed the sound the most, allowing us to evolve from one primary songwriting voice to an amalgamation of three personalities. For the album, we adopted more electronic tones than we had been using live before, and that has really helped us further define our voice as a band. We now use a lot more synths and and drum machines live as well.

DT: Where did the idea of melding male and female vocals come from?

X: Monika's vocal chords are hemaphroditic.

DT: Influences?

X: sex, sadness, nostalgia, ecstasy, irony, break-ups, and break-downs.

DT: What kind of approach do you take to performing in a live setting?

X: We've worked on devising ways of performing the songs from the record (which are pretty electronic) at our shows, using organic instruments as well as samplers and synths. The energy of a live show is different than that of a record, so we've gone through the process of refining the arrangements of the songs for the stage, while also being mindful of maintaining the nuances of the studio recordings.

DT: Any principally memorable gigs?

X: Last night we played a show with Gobble Gobble at the Bottletree in Birmingham AL. We loved them. It was like watching the characters of a video game come into human form at a gay disco.

DT: In the last few years New York has seen an inordinate number of bands come through (particularly Brooklyn), is the scene still thriving?

X: oh yes! take a walk through Williamsburg in the summer and it's undeniable.

DT: Behind the guitars and synth there's strong pop melodies that offer a modernization of an aesthetically 80's sound. "Darling Dearest" is a great example of this. Anything particular about that era of pop that fuels the band?

X: We love how a lot of 80s New Wave and Pop is good for dancing, and is musically optimistic in mood. We grew up listening to 80s music so there is a bit of nostalgia there. Some of our lyrics are on the moody side so maybe that's what makes us still sound modern.

DT: What current bands do you enjoy now?

X: James Blake, Twin Shadow, Beach House, Robyn, Buke and Gass are all making great new music these days.

DT: What do you hope listeners ascertain from your music?

X: Whatever they need. We hope that Xylos's music can accompany their laundry folding, dinner making, gym workouts, making out, secret and public spontaneous dance breakouts.

DT: Where do you see Xylos going in the coming years?

X: Los Angeles, Stockholm, Tel Aviv, and all points inbetween.

