



## The most enchanting album of 2008

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**W**ith a voice as sweet as cherry pie, Thao Nguyen lilts and sighs her way through songs in a way that makes you instantly fall in love with her. Along with her band, The Get Down Stay Down, the Virginia native has produced perhaps the most enchanting album of 2008 so far; *We Brave*

*Bee Stings and All.*

"I started playing guitar when I was 12," she says, "I was writing stupid songs about crushes — I'm still writing essentially the same thing..."

Thao (rhymes with 'wow') recorded 2005's *Like the Linen* while still at university earning her degree in Women's Studies. For such an independent woman, what's it like being the only girl on the tour bus?

"It's actually great, they are the three most sensitive men in the world," Really?

"Well...mostly we get on really well, but if I'm cranky they make jokes, but it's fine really, I make a lot dirtier jokes than them anyway."

Sounding like Cat Power in cowboy boots, Thao's lyrics are at once naïve and world-weary. Her live shows are a dreamy, laid-back affair, but she has recently learned not to be too laid back.

Thao is not afraid to write autobiographically. Her songs travel the well-trodden path of falling in and out of love, but her clever metaphors, captivating melodies and the way her voice breaks make her sound like the first person ever to have had their heart broken.

Thao and her band will be coming to the UK this month for a full national tour. "I'm a big fan of the UK," she says, "I studied in London while I was at university — it's a great place."

In total, Thao plans to be on tour for the whole year, but says she needs breaks in between. "I do enjoy touring, but it gets to a point where you just wanna eat some fresh vegetables and sleep for more than four hours at a time," she laughs.

*We Brave Bee Stings and All* is out on the 4 February 2008 on Kill Rock Stars.

Poppy O'Neill

### Moi et Mon Camion

Merz

Gronland

**M***oi et Mon Camion* is the third outing for the artist Merz, otherwise known as Conrad Lambert. His two previously critically acclaimed albums have earned him an international reputation, and a recent European tour with The Earlies, which continues to bring him to the attention of an increasingly diverse audience.

After walking away from a major label deal in 1999, Lambert seemed to be adrift, yet this nomadic spirit is the perfect encapsulation for the ghostly acoustics. As an experienced traveller, Lambert felt that the record's transient theme warranted further exploitation and consequently most of the ten album tracks were recorded in different locations

A particular stand out track is the tender *Call Me*, a highly effectual song that combines heartfelt lyrics with a sublimely simple melody managing to eschew any prevalent "love-song" clichés. The album's title track, subtitled *The Eviction Song* was recorded with backing vocals courtesy of an itinerant local, the Old Man of Bath. His vocals enact a touching parallel between that of Lambert, the voices of young and old recounting the transient nature of time as well as place.



Alice Roberts