



My Idea of Pop

Morton Valence



“It could be a person, a product, a washing powder or a type of car,” explains Robert Jesset, “but we just called the band Morton Valence, as that’s where a friend of ours had a recording studio.” For such an incidental naming, the heroic-sounding Morton Valence perfectly suits the stylized romance of the band.

Concept album, *Bob and Veronica Ride Again*, tells the tale of an unlikely couple who embark on a dreamy journey, leaving behind past disappointments to eventually find domestic bliss. Backed by musical three-piece, The Medellin Mafia (Leo Fernandez, Camilo Parra and Alex Paleaz), the vocals of Robert Jesset and Anne Gilpin narrate the legend of Bob and Veronica. Male/female duos are not synonymous with cool, however, mainly due to the seductive quality of Gilpin’s voice, the vocal pairing of Jesset and Gilpin manages to evoke the glamour of a by-gone era whilst delivering a truly modern sound.

From the aesthetic of the album art, inspired by 1970s Mills & Boon romance novels, Morton Valence enthusiastically embrace the sound and style of popular culture. “The word ‘pop’ has become sullied, boy bands, girl bands, Simon Cowell etc,” explains Jesset, “but beautiful pop is magical, escapist music that gives you a larger than life feeling.” First track, *Veronica’s Revenge*, opens with the sound of the London tube train, recorded on Jesset’s Olympus voice-recorder. Capturing the sound of London, this layering of real-life street noise over often-surreal narrative adds an extra dimension to these uplifting, country-infused rock’n’roll ballads. Add heavy synths and electric strings to the mix, and Morton Valence is an idiosyncratic art conceit worthy of comparison to seminal artists Phil Spector, Art Brut and the Butthole Surfers. The uniting factor among this seemingly dissimilar cohort of influences is

the timeless appeal of undeniable individuality.

Signed to an independent label, Jesset became increasingly disillusioned. “It was hugely frustrating, we were forced into having a record cover we didn’t like, and lost control over what we were doing.” The unorthodox solution was to leave the label and sell album shares directly to their fans via the band’s Myspace page. “The response was amazing,” reveals Jesset, “£20,000 raised so far.”

This tactic of floating shares is not an easy option, so why has it been so successful for Morton Valence? Jesset has a genuine, passionate respect for his fans. “Fans are the lifeblood of any band. We’ve been gigging for a long time, we’ve built up a solid group of fans, and we’re collaborating with them,” Jesset expands, “when a record company comes along, they help themselves to your fans’ money and give you a small cut. We want to generate profit for our fans.” Cutting out the middlemen has allowed the band the purity of creative vision, whilst simultaneously proving idealism can drive a commercially successful venture. In the age of the pirate download, this direct route could revitalise gloomy predictions on the industry’s direction.

“At the end of the day, it’s just a different model of getting our music out there. If nobody likes your music, it’s not going to happen. We want to be known as a band for the music, not the band that first came up with selling shares to their fans.”

Bob and Veronica Ride Again is out now on Bastard Recordings. For further information visit www.myspace.com/mortonvalence.

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