An unexpected step into rock stardom for L.A.'s Awolnation

**MUSIC PREVIEW**

**Awolnation**

**WHEN**
- Guetta
- Tuesday, April 4 at 7 p.m.
- Edison Room Center
- 1007 S Hill St.
- 323-461-7628

**HOMEPAGE**
- 314-sydneyhmannz.net

**Justin Andrade**
**ARTS & CULTURE WRITER**

Despite the skyrocketing success of his band Awolnation, lead singer Aaron Bruno still insists it's just business as usual. For the laid-back man at the helm of the electronic rock group, the full measure of his band's success is still just beginning to dawn on him. After releasing their debut album *Megalithic Symphony* a year ago, the band has watched their first single "Silas" go platinum in Canada amid growing crowds on their tour schedule.

"I still have a sense of being the underdog," Bruno says. "It seems to be unbelievable that the release of the album has gone as well as it has. It is incredibly surreal to have this many people come to our shows and care about what we're doing and interpret the lyrics and become real fans of the record."

Formerly of the band Under the Influence of Giants, Bruno's new role in Awolnation represents the autonomous side of his musical efforts. While songwriting in his past band was a collaboration between he and his bandmates, his duties as principal songwriter in Awolnation mean he can make the energetic and upbeat music of this new band wholly his own.

"Before, it was those cooks in the kitchen, and now it's just me — that's the real only difference," Bruno says of the changes in his songwriting tactics. "I feel that freedom can be very inspiring and there no limit to what you want to do."

"(The music I write) is what I would want to hear more so than it is who I am," he continues. "I try to write songs that seem to have an energy that fill void in the music I'm listening to at the time ... I think it's really exciting to listen to energetic music and at this point, certainly being the debut album, it felt more natural to grab people by the throat right away as opposed to easing into it — which lends room for the next record to be more spacious and even more strange."

With a year of critical and commercial success behind them, the band continues to find more exciting opportunities as their profile grows. For Bruno, the band's recent trip to South Africa to perform at Red Rocks was one of the most anticipated — and inspiring — of his career.

"I never thought I would be going to South Africa ever, really, for any reason other than maybe to go surf down there," he laughs. Instead, the unfamiliar surroundings of the country provided a new source of creative inspiration.

"Every day I pick up something new, nothing's something I'm mentally and physically aware of right away, and to be excited by it counts," Bruno says. "Sometimes it's something that happens in the subconscious, and then later on you'll have a melody idea and maybe it's from the rhythm of the street you were walking through, and you didn't realize at the time a little seed was planted, but then it grows." In the wake of their rise to fame, Awolnation still has plenty of work ahead of them. But as Bruno reflects on his experiences in the music industry, everything seems to have happened exactly the way it was needed.

"I had gone through this in my first attempt back in the day, but maybe I would have handled it differently," he says. "I'm grateful this happened later in life and not early on in where it would've gone to my head."

---

**ALBUM REVIEW**

**The Internet**

**Purple Naked Ladies**

Odd Future Records
purplenakedladies.com

**Ramneek Tung**
**ARTS & CULTURE STAFF**

As one of the only openly gay performers in the world of mainstream hip-hop, Syd the Kid draws a lot of attention. More interesting is the fact that she's the sole female member of the extremely popular group Odd Future, known for their frequently misogynistic and homophobic lyrics.

While she's one of the better-known members, she isn't nearly as vocal as some of her bandmates, such as the fact hits leader Tyler the Creator, giving her a certain mystique. Purple Naked Ladies, a collaborative effort with producer Matt Martians, is her highly anticipated solo debut, serving as a proper introduction to one of the most intriguing figures in popular music.

An epic musical odyssey into the realms of trip-hop, soul and electronics, Purple Naked Ladies sees Matt Martians recite the early 2000s sound, letting the synthesizers and drum machines run rampant. While listeners might be expecting the violent, explicit rhymes of Odd Future, Syd the Kid instead adopts a soulful croon — there are a few raps, but they're expendable, and the album would have been better off without them.

While Syd is a capable vocalist, her songwriting skills can be a little week. Fortunately, Martians' production compensates for the lack of lyrical prowess, through his instrumentals tend to overshadow Syd's vocals. There are a few well-executed songs — especially the undeniable "Cocaine," which would be at home on the soundtrack to Brian DePalma's Scarface. But apart from that track, the album is at its best when Syd drops unintelligible ad-libs over Martians' instrumental work, especially on the provocative "Celebrate!"

Although the highlights are hidden deep within the album, the entire recording serves as an avant-garde call in the progressive world of contemporary hip-hop. Syd the Kid has a lot of maturing to do in the songwriting department, but with the distinct production of Martians, the future looks bright for one of Odd Future's standouts.

---

**FOR MORE:**

**Deadline for entries is Wednesday, March 28 at 5 p.m.**

Entries will be judged on both creativity and style by a panel of editors. Submissions must be original and must not have been published elsewhere. Please submit entries to gateway@gateway.unlberkeley.edu with the subject head "Gateway Literary Contest 2012" and the category you're entering. Please include your name, program, and year with your entry. Contestants may only enter each category once.