

IVY

The members of the critically acclaimed New York trio IVY have been refining their distinctive brand of evocative, bittersweet pop for nearly a decade. But on the long-awaited *In The Clear* (the group's fourth full-length, not including 2002's all-covers collection *Guestroom*), they have combined elements of each of their previous records to make what may be the most striking and confident album of their career.

IVY — Parisian-born singer Dominique Durand, Andy Chase and Adam Schlesinger — began life as a stripped-down indie band, with a unpolished, jangly sound offset by Durand's intimate, and (especially in the early days) heavily accented vocals. But on their breakthrough second album *Apartment Life* in 1997, they began to augment their succinct melodies and chiming guitars with richer arrangements that revealed their growing comfort level in the recording studio. On 2001's *Long Distance*, lush soundscapes and dense rhythm tracks were brought to the fore, and bouncy pop songs were outnumbered by moodier, more atmospheric songs like the standout single "Edge Of The Ocean."

When starting sessions for *In The Clear*, the band tried to strike a balance between the immediacy of their early recordings and the careful sonic detailing of their more recent work. "Initially we talked about going back to more of a live band sound," explains Schlesinger with a smile, "but of course that wouldn't have taken long enough." And, for IVY, part of the pleasure of making a record is experimentation in the studio.

Chase elaborates, "We tried to capture the excitement of just playing together -- on guitar or piano and drums -- first. We would put down lots of raw, spontaneous ideas, and then the three of us would flesh them out over time, constantly adding or taking things away, but always trying to retain that initial energy." This method, while common for some bands, represented a totally new approach for IVY, who in the past had written almost exclusively outside the studio; on *In The Clear*, the writing and recording processes often blended together.

Not every idea held up over time, or ultimately met IVY's songwriting standards. "There were some musical ideas that we really loved, but sometimes they didn't fit the direction we were going or we couldn't turn them into complete songs that I was comfortable singing," says Durand. "But many came together very quickly."

The 10 songs on *In The Clear* vary in tempo and mood, and yet the record has a sense of continuity that is never lost -- from the slow crescendo of the introductory "Nothing But The Sky," through visceral pop songs like "Thinking About You," "Tess Don't Tell" and "I've Got You Memorized," to slinkier, subtler tracks like "Four In The Morning," "Ocean City Girl" and "Keep Moving." Many lyrics suggest internal narratives more than straightforward storytelling; themes of secrecy, isolation and escape resurface throughout the album.

IVY brought in legendary UK producer/mixer Steve Osborne (New Order, Happy Mondays, Starsailor, Elbow) for his first-ever New York sessions to mix much of the record. It was Osborne's ability to make records sound both aggressive and spacious that attracted the group to his work.

In The Clear also features guest appearances by friends like guitarists James Iha (A Perfect Circle, Smashing Pumpkins) and Jody Porter (Fountains Of Wayne), Brazilian string arranger Zé Luis (Bebel Gilberto, Caetano Veloso), and former Girls Against Boys frontman Scott McCloud, who duets with Durand on the closing track, "Feel So Free."

Over the last few years, even in the absence of a new record, IVY's audience has grown substantially thanks to continued use of their music in television, films, TV ads, and compilations. The Farrelly Brothers asked IVY to score their film *Shallow Hal* and have also licensed IVY songs for several other of their films; the song "Worry About You" from *Long Distance* was the opening theme song for the Stephen King ABC miniseries *Kingdom Hospital*; and the band's music has been heard in numerous other films and television shows, including an episode of *Roswell* that even featured the band in live performance.

When not working with IVY, all three members have kept quite busy – Schlesinger is also in the band Fountains Of Wayne and produces and writes for various other projects; Chase released a solo album in 2003 under the moniker Brookville and also produces. Durand and Chase also collaborated with longtime friend Michael Hampton in the band Paco, which has released an ep and lp to date.

In The Clear will be released in North America in March by Nettwerk America Records. Tour plans and other band news will be posted at www.thebandivy.com.