

The Postmarks

Letters. Remember those? You can't knock the immediacy of email, it's true, but most of us miss those hand-written communiqués from lovers, family or friends. Somewhere on the envelope was a postmark, testament to a passage across actual land or sea, rather than a rapid zap through cyberspace. "That's why the name '**The Postmarks**' stuck with us", says Christopher Moll, one third of the Miami trio with that very moniker. "We liked the romantic notion of a postmark documenting a letter's journey."

Together with fellow multi-instrumentalist Jonathan Wilkins and singer/lyricist Tim Yehezkely, Moll crafts meticulously arranged, richly cinematic music with subtle nods to Bacharach, Brian Wilson, classic British indie and vintage French pop. Had The Sundays embraced a Baroque aesthetic or Van Dyke Parks orchestrated an especially autumnal-sounding Françoise Hardy album, it might have sounded something like **The Postmarks'** self-titled debut.

"We aim to produce songs that sound like they've always existed and always will exist", says Christopher of his band's chic, sepia-tinted output, and with Yehezkely and Wilkins on board, all is possible. Tim, we should point out, is a gal with a boy's name; a beautiful, yet inscrutable individual possessed of a soft-textured voice that's simultaneously seductive and detached. When Tim Yehezkely sings, clocks stop, people listen, and ice cream refuses to melt.

How did an Anglophile/Francophile indie band come to form in the rock cover-versions hub that is South Florida? Well hold up – let's not get ahead of ourselves here. Let's start by pointing out that, pre-Postmarks, the Miami-born Jonathan had played with Christopher in Brazilica music/Stereolab-influenced indie outfit See Venus. Prior to *that*, moreover, Jonathan had been based in San Francisco scoring music for independent films.

Christopher – born in The Bronx, NYC - had already established himself as a gifted composer, arranger and producer around Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. He also shared Jonathan's passion for film music, and as Jonathan tells it, the pair's friendship was sealed by a shared appreciation of the score for the 1973, Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing-appointed gore-fest *Horror Express*, a flick they'd both seen as kids.

By 2004, See Venus was no more, though, and Jonathan was periodically DJ-ing at Dada, a West Palm Beach venue that sometimes had open-mic nights. One evening a girl with a boy's name got up. It was Tim Yehezkely, of course, and when the enigmatic, Tel Aviv-born singer managed to silence then enthrall the normally rowdy crowd, Jonathan made sure to approach her afterwards.

"That night was actually the first time I had performed in front of anybody", recalls Tim. "I'd been writing songs and demoing them at home, but just for myself really. It was me with my guitar or me with my accordion."

"I didn't want to make her nervous", adds Jonathan, so I arranged this kind of secret audition for the project I knew Christopher was working on."

"I think Jonathan had ulterior motives, actually", chips in Christopher, laughing. "But yeah, he spoke to Tim, and the next time she was playing he lured me out from my cave to take a look for myself. She was amazing. I fell in love immediately."

That 'cave' Christopher speaks of is his home studio in Coral Springs, North of Fort Lauderdale. You

could call it an Aladdin's cave, actually, for the place is festooned with vintage keyboards and all kinds of exotic instrumentation. It was there, overlooked by a poster of the sleeve art for John Coltrane's *Blue Train*, that **The Postmarks** recorded a beguiling debut album scored for strings, brass and woodwind. During the daytime sessions, swarms of yellow/orange butterflies would sometimes flit past Christopher's second floor window at treetop level.

It's worth reiterating that the influence of film / film soundtracks on **The Postmarks'** music cannot be overstated. "Our album has very few direct references as far as other bands go", says Jonathan. "We're much more influenced by composers like John Barry and Ennio Morricone, plus lesser-known guys like Les Baxter."

When resident Francophile Tim is asked what inspired her impressionistic, evocative lyrics on the album, moreover, she's quick to cite Jean-Pierre Jeunet's magical 2001 film *Amélie* as a touchstone. "I fell in love with that movie, that director, and Yann Tiersen's music for the film", she says. "Something about the world *Amélie* creates and the emotions the film brings out just resonated with me."

You'll remember that, earlier on, we mentioned Miami being sorted for bar bands playing cover versions. Jonathan points out the city has never had its own music genre 'scenes' as such, and that this probably explains why successful acts from the **Florida** locale – hello Marilyn Manson, Gloria Estefan and Tom Petty – have tended to be a musically diverse bunch.

"At times we felt like we were on a desert island", says Christopher picking up the theme of musical isolation. "We had to set this flare off to let people know we were alive. When we finished recording the album we firmly believed we were onto something, but we wanted to bring in a bigger name to mix it - **Someone we respected**. That's where Andy came in."

Ah, yes - Andy Chase. Though the likes of Richard Hawley and Sean 'High Llamas' O'Hagan also had dealings with The Postmarks, it was Chase - founder of Unfiltered Records and esteemed producer of acts such as Ivy and Tahiti 80 – who mixed the rather wonderful CD you hold in your hands. Andy was particularly taken with "Goodbye", a choice nugget that would bed-down beautifully on a solo album by Mama Cass, and which has since benefited from a magical animated video courtesy of Kirby McClure and Julia Grigorian, AKA acclaimed Los Angeles-based directing duo, Radical Friend.

At the time of writing, **The Postmarks** have finished working on *By The Numbers*, a 12-part series of cover songs that US website eMusic are offering as free MP3 downloads on a month-by-month basis. Christopher, Tim and Jonathan have already filed unique takes on Bob Marley's "Three Little Birds" and John Barry's "You Only Live Twice", and currently have David Bowie's "Five Years" in their sights.

The group's ace debut album is out in the UK 28th July so maybe **The Postmarks** will venture here soon? "That would be great!" says Jonathan, audibly excited at the prospect. "If Mr Branson could avail us of one of his airplanes or balloons we'd love to!"