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**New Music Spotlight
May 2010 Edition**

The Portraits

Music Now Artist/Band Spotlight Weekly Series

Jeremy Millington (vocals, pianos, guitars, bass, percussion, programming) and Lorraine Millington (vocals, guitars) make up the band known as The Portraits. Together they make magical beautiful music that harmoniously blends the wonderful voices of Jeremy and Lorraine. In this spotlight with our Webzine, The Portraits speak candidly about their mission, music, and what others can expect from them.



The Portraits

Isaac: I just listened to one of your songs from your CD. What was the inspiration for making your new album?

The Portraits: A sense that the world is such an uneven place, and the desire to tell the stories of some of those the planet left behind. In particular, we have an interest in the Burmese people who are such a warm race living under such harsh conditions while the world ignores them. The songs Liberty, I Am Made Queen and Bago Girl relate directly to our experiences of this tragic nation.

Isaac: Who were your influences?

The Portraits: We have been writing together for so long that we are quite detached now from our influences. Jeremy (pianist, vocalist and on the CD percussionist, bassist and programmer as well) is influenced by the vocal sounds of 70s and 80s music, and Lorraine's Irish upbringing contributes the Celtic tinge to our sound. We used to use many more electronic elements in our sound, but this time, we wanted to strip ourselves down to the raw components – haunting pianos, acoustic guitars, real percussion and layered vocal harmonies.

Isaac: What do you consider to have been the highlight(s) and lowpoint(s) of your career to date?

The Portraits: The highpoint is coming later this year – a concert in London supporting at least one major label artist (to be announced shortly) to raise awareness of the situation in Burma. This will be on 16th October at The Free Word Centre, Farringdon and is being organized collectively with some brilliant musicians, artists and theatre people.

Low point has been trying to bring some vitality to our own area, and feeling we are failing miserably! We are currently based for the majority of the year in a beautiful town in France, La Rochelle, which is a brilliant place for tourists, but whose scant music venues are closing down at an alarming rate. Things have gone so well for us elsewhere, particularly in London, and yet here we find ourselves at a loss for places to be able to express what we do. This is especially frustrating when, through the few occasions we have played here, we've immediately found a strong following – a really appreciative and dedicated French audience, who don't have the chance to follow us as much as they'd like to, or we'd like them to. And for that matter, they don't get the chance to hear anything else either.

Even busking here carries with it a lot of administrative work that would put most people off. We are sad about this

– France is perhaps unknowingly holding back a lot of talented young people in a variety of spheres because it makes them jump through hoops to succeed.

The Portraits



Isaac: Brief history about your background plus the style of music you play.

The Portraits: Our song writing partnership grew over a decade ago when we were young teachers on the Isle of Wight, UK, Lorraine an art tutor and Jeremy a classroom music teacher. We soon turned our backs on the day jobs, setting out to perfect our craft, working with a series of other musicians and eking out a following on the Bristol and London live gig circuits at the turn of the millennium. Time spent in France in the new decade helped to fine-tune the concept of The Portraits, and some of the French chanson style influenced our sound. We are about to release our third album as The Portraits, and our sound has gradually found itself, built as it is around “choir-like” vocal arrangements, orchestral instruments and world percussion. It is a fresh but retro sound, with hints of

Brian Wilson, Ben Folds, the Beautiful South and even Enya, but we think with a confidence in its own individuality as well.

Isaac: How easy is it to get gigs for you as an artist? What is the live music scene like in your area?

The Portraits: As mentioned previously, in La Rochelle it is very difficult. Luckily we are connected easily to the UK, and play often in London, where there is a very open scene with opportunities on every corner for intimate acoustic acts to get heard.

Isaac: What do you think of the state of Indie music at the moment? Do you listen to radio much at all? Has the Internet helped music grow or hindered it in your opinion?

The Portraits: Having always been ardently DIY in our approach to our music production, we are huge fans of the new directions in music-making that have sprung up in the last decade. What could be better than musicians taking control of their destinies back from the majors, who never had the best interests of those creating the material they were profiting from at heart. On the flipside, the Internet has facilitated music promotion, and anyone and everyone can have a go now, so there is much much more competition for any working and performing musician.

Being heard above the masses of other people trying to have their voice is the challenge we all face in the industry now. Finding others in the same boat...other bands who are doing something similar to yourself and up against the same hurdles is paradoxically far easier nowadays, and we believe in the strength in numbers principle – team up and work together to find opportunities and share them!

The Portraits



Isaac: If you could create a fantasy band - what would be the line-up and why?

The Portraits: Ours would contain a hugely eclectic mix – the percussion section of the African band Bayete, the King Singers layered vocal harmonies, the Kronos string quartet and a DJ to add in some electronic textures.

Isaac: What CD's do you currently have available and where can they be purchased from?

The Portraits: Three albums to date:

KIN (2006)

TIMESCAPE (2008)

THE BLUSHING OF A WORLD IN WHITE (release June 2010)

All available from iTunes, CDBaby, Amazon and our own site www.theportraits.info

Isaac: Where can fans access your music, videos, blogs, and anything else about you online?

The Portraits:

www.theportraits.info

www.myspace.com/theportraitseurope

Isaac: Message to your fans?

The Portraits: A huge thanks to all those who've signed our mailing list, turned out to gigs and taken the time to write to us in the last year. A month of stalled opportunities and frustrations can be put right in an instant when someone – a real, living, breathing human – gets in touch to say they love what we do. It might sound clichéd, but we do it for you. Not for the industry, not to make loads of cash, but genuinely for the love of touching others, making a small difference in someone's existence or making someone think differently about something. Even in a small way. That's what it's all about.



The Portraits' Official Website

www.theportraits.info

