

Peace's Harry Koisser and Dominic Boyce on inspiration, influences and identity

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Peace have just released their first album *In Love*, which sold almost 10,000 copies in its first week in the UK alone. Prior to their 9 April 2013 performance in *Botanique*, one of Brussels' most acclaimed venues, singer Harry and drummer Dominic kindly allowed Keys and Chords to steal some time out of their busy schedule. Much appreciated.

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BY JULIAN DE BACKER

**BRUSSELS – Michelle Van Praag, Sony's kind and generous PR-lady, escorts me through the labyrinth that is the *Botanique's* basement. We arrive at a small door that reads “Peace”. A knock and a “come in!” later, the following ensued ...**

*Congratulations on the album, guys! I liked it a lot. It sounds like you recorded it without a lot of overdubs ...*

Harry: “Yeah, that's true. We tried to do as little overdubs as we could, after recording it in the room together.”

*It has a live feeling to it ...*

Harry: “Yeah, that was important for us.”

*The beginning of the song Delicious sounds quite eerie, like something out of the Twilight Zone. How did that atmosphere come about?*

Harry: “I guess it just happened with the song. We started with the clicking sound (snaps fingers), which sounds like congas. We tuned it and put a delay on it. It started off as two congas going “dum dum dum”, which was subsequently pitched up. We then put eerie sounds on top of it and it just seemed to work ...”

*You even added an awesome 80's drum sound. When you sing ‘I wanna get lovesick with you’, does that mean “You broke my heart and that's why I'm lovesick” or “The two of us are lovesick, having our hearts broken by our respective boy/girlfriend and we might become each others rebound”?*

Harry: “I guess *Lovesick* talks about a double-edged sword, because it's basically about not wanting to be in love with someone. It can go either way, I guess.”

*... and you can't do anything about it?*

Harry: “I don't know. It's complaining about it.”

*Is it autobiographical or made-up?*

Harry: "Kind of. At the time, maybe. But it's not specifically autobiographical at all. It's the first song I wrote where I thought: "Anyone can sing it, or be into it". I didn't write it necessarily for myself."

*Great artwork for your album, by the way! Who came up with it?*

Harry: "It's a bit inspired, at first, by *The Kids Are Alright*, the picture with The Who sat under the Union Jack. I wanted to get some material and just lie under it. We bought 50 meters of red velvet, we got our photographer and just experimented ..."

*Did you consider any other options for the cover?*

Harry: "Loads of options ... loads! Wait, why did I say 'loads'? (laughs)"

Dominic: "A few ..."

Harry: "Yeah. We had loads of ideas, but those were similar to the EP artwork. It just didn't feel right. But when we saw the photograph [of the one we settled on], we said: "That should be the one"! It just made sense. It didn't seem like something we'd do, to put ourselves on the cover. That would be the last thing people would expect from us. So ... we did it. Go against the grain!"

*Bands always like to play a few songs, as a warm-up or as a soundcheck. What sort of track do you play when you want to, say, check the equipment?*

Dominic: "*Black Dog* ..."

Harry: "Usually *Since I've Been Loving You* by Led Zeppelin. What else have we done? The Beatles' *Don't Let Me Down* always comes up."

*Any guilty pleasures, maybe?*

Harry: "I sometimes do Céline Dion's *My Heart Will Go On* ..."

*You can pull it off?*

Harry: "Oh yeah! (laughs)"

*Have you heard the song Bedlam in Belgium by AC/DC?*

Harry: "I don't think so ..."

*It's written after a particularly nasty gig. Police had to come, there was a gunshot etcetera. I just wondered : have you ever been inspired by a sour performance?*

Harry: "Not really. We've been pretty fortunate with all of our shows. I don't think we've had terrible shows yet."

Dominic: "No murders or anything at our shows ..."

*You're an English band. For the past 60 years, the UK has been a phenomenal host to a lot of bands. We already mentioned The Beatles and Led Zeppelin. There's even the saying: "To be born an Englishman is to win first prize in the lottery of life" ...*

Harry: "Oh, I didn't know that ..."

*Yeah, Rhodes (or Kipling) said that. Say we let chauvinism rear its ugly head. What are you guys most proud of?*

Dominic: "Hmm, that's an interesting question. I guess heritage, musical heritage."

Harry: "Yeah, we got some good bands ..."

Dominic: "There's not a lot more to be proud of ..."

Harry: "What else is there?"

Dominic: "I don't know ..."

Harry: "Tea? That's Indian, right?"

Dominic: "Yeah, we stole that ... what else?"

*Movies?*

Dominic: "Movies ... yeah? YEAH! We do some good TV ..."

*You have an amazing comedy reputation ...*

Harry: "But being a British comedian, there's obviously ..."

Dominic: "Are you calling yourself a British comedian?"

Harry: "No no no. But a lot of brilliant television comes from: "I can be an asshole and still be funny!"."

Dominic: "I also like old-fashioned English traditions."

Harry: "But some of them are bullshit."

Dominic: "Some of them *are* bullshit."

*I read about Morrissey being sued by his drummer. The judge was so old-fashioned; he went fox hunting, he had to be explained what the word 'gig' meant, he didn't know Top of the Pops. Morrissey complained about the injustice of the English law system. He got robbed, just because "a drummer" - who didn't write any songs and was just in the band to get the girls - thought he could ...*

Harry: "Yeah (points to Dominic, the drummer)"

*No! Sure, there are drummer jokes, but ...*

[Tour manager enters the room and drops a few belongings, including wooden clogs or “klompen”]

*Ah, those are Dutch ...*

Harry: “I bought them for my girlfriend!”

*Have you ever seen The Blues Brothers?*

Dominic and Harry: “Yeah! Of course!”

*Joliet Jake (John Belushi) sees the light and reforms the band. At what point in time did you guys see the light?*

Harry: “When we started ... well, when people started coming to our shows. We were in Birmingham and we were playing shows that people were really enjoying. It just felt good, it felt like it could go somewhere.”

Dominic: “I don’t think there was ever a defining moment.”

Harry: “Slow ...”

Dominic: “Gradual ...”

Harry: “I haven’t made up my mind yet!”

*This is what you want to do, right?*

Harry: “Yes, yes!”

Dominic: “I’m still on the fence, still deciding (laughs)”

*Bands nowadays have to interact with their fans via social media. It’s an extra effort guys like The Rolling Stones or The Beatles didn’t have to make. Is it a blessing or is it a curse, as Jim Steinman would say?*

Dominic: “If you compare it to them, we have it a lot easier. They were harassed 24/7. Sending a tweet out every now and then isn’t that hard.”

Harry: “But then again, people bought their records ... I don’t know. It’s weird saying that, because The Rolling Stones *now* are posting videos on YouTube.”

*Sure, but we all know that’s directed by the PR department ...*

Harry: “Yeah, but ... it seems unnecessary, but it’s very necessary!”

Dominic: “It’s just the ways things work nowadays.”

[The Sony representative indicates that the next question has to be the final one]

*I have to compliment you on California Daze. When I first heard it, there were echoes of The Beatles, a lot of The Kinks, some contemporary Franz Ferdinand-esque sounds ... it's quintessential English.*

Harry: "It's very English!"

*And the chorus is very Beach Boys ...*

Harry: "When we were in the studio and our producer Jim Abiss first heard it, he said it sounded exactly like Bowie. And I thought: "Weird, but that's a compliment". I guess it is a song like that, but then again, I've listened to all of these bands. I really wanted to do that kind of song, to be able to tick that box."

*Final questions, guys. Are you familiar at all with Belgian music?*

Harry: "Not really ..."

Dominic: "No ..."

Harry: "What's Belgian?"

*Dominique by The Singing Nun. Or Technotronic's Pump Up The Jam.*

Harry: "Oh?"

*Thank you very much for this interview. Best of luck, with both album and career. I'm looking forward to the second one.*

Harry: "Thanks, we appreciate that."

Dominic: "Thanks, man."