

the quavers

lit by your phone

Band: **The Quavers** Album: **Lit By Your Phone**
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All Songs FCC Clean ** Recommended tracks: 4 and 12

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download photos: shinylittlerecords.com/mediacenter.html



photo: michael ackerman

what the critics said about *The Sea Won't Take Long*:

"a hushed collision of Vic Chesnutt, Low and Jim O'Rourke... its wounded ambience both delicate and dense." - *Uncut* (UK)
"searches for the heart of alt-country and finds it in a junk yard full of old computer parts..." - *Minneapolis City Pages*

The Quavers coax a luminous sound out of decayed samplers, walkmans, vibraphonette, footpedal loopers, tape echo violin and homespun harmonies. Like a space-age Carter Family, they weave low-tech electronics around songs sturdy enough to stand up even if the power goes out. They call it "porch techno".

Over the last two years **T. Griffin** and **Catherine McRae** spent a lot of time packed into a black 1993 Saturn with a trunk full of instruments and electronics, and no AC. They were doing a long, ramshackle, side-road tour for the 2004 record *The Sea Won't Take Long* which they released under the name T. Griffin Coraline.

When they got back to Brooklyn and opened the trunk, they found a trove of songs along with the wires, dead batteries, samplers and amps. These songs became *Lit By Your Phone*, an album full of haunted samples, twin vocals, and narratives gathered on the side of the road. It's a sound that reflects the hallucinatory telepathy that two people can experience after 14 hours in a car together.

This sound perfectly suits songs that are as comfortable with the cast-off souls on the creepy byways of industrial Brooklyn as they are with a war widow on a lost weekend, or a salesman driving across Montana with his lights off. For much of the record Griffin and McRae sing in tight harmony, or unison, which has the effect of making the characters at once sharper and more dreamlike. In many songs you can't tell whether the narrator is a man or a woman. The samples merge with the acoustic instruments so that it's hard to tell where one starts and the other ends. McRae's violin is often distorted to the point that you can't tell it from the guitars.

"Every night we were playing live using two beat-up samplers, a guitar, a violin, some foot pedal loopers, walkmans, a tape echo and this thing called a Bittman" says Mcrae. "And the sounds we were making started to really surprise us. It was balancing in a strange limbo between old fashioned porch music and a really dog-eared electronica."

"There was this great tension about the way we were playing," says Griffin. "We were creating this really huge, layered sound. We wanted to capture *that* when we got back to the studio. So we made a rule: we'd only use the gear we had in the car. We did as much of it as possible live. We used our footpedal loopers and cheap samplers even though it would have been easier to do the same things with a computer. We wanted to keep that off-kilter edge."

"The thing is," he adds, "we were never doing any of this sonic adventuring to be experimental; to us it just seemed natural. I look down at the blinking lights in front of us when we play and I think: 'these are folk instruments now!'"

Though most of their touring was as a duo, Griffin and McRae have an extended family of musicians that join them frequently. The most consistent of the them, **Dennis Cronin** (Vitamin-D, Lambchop) adds spare flashes of vibraphonette, lap steel and trumpet and joins them for most of their East Coast shows. Montrealer **Bruce Cawdron** (godspeed you! black emperor, Esmerine) fits his Mo Tucker toms and oceanic cymbal washes around the shuffling sampled rhythms and often joins them for Northeast and Canadian shows. *Lit By Your Phone* was started shortly after a 2006 tour of community centers in rural Quebec that they played as a quartet.

For *Lit By Your Phone* they also decided that it was time to jettison the nom-de-rock T. Griffin Coraline, which was a vestige from the two critically acclaimed CDs Griffin put out on his own, *Tortuga* and *Light in the Aisles*. McRae suggested The Quavers, which Griffin thought was the name of a bird. It turns out it's not, but the name suggested something tense and electric, so it stuck. "It was a pretty simple decision", says Griffin. "We function as a band now, so if we're going to fill the trunk and get back in that black Saturn, we needed to make it legal and take a band name."