



YEASAYER

BY NEVIN MARTELL

In Yeasayer's new video, a man with a mirror for a face rides a wild stallion across a desert landscape. Another beats a drum on a mountaintop. Two more box, bare-chested, their hands sheathed in sparkling silver gloves. And all these naked people keep running around. There's music, too—a pulsing, rolling alt-dance tune on acid that perfectly soundtracks all this sci-fi madness, though it would be just as welcome in a late-night tent rave at Coachella. Welcome to a decidedly Not Safe For Work alternate reality.

What you're experiencing is born of the psychedelic imagination of the Brooklyn-via-Baltimore art-pop collective consisting of vocalist/key-boardist Chris Keating, vocalist/guitarist Anand Wilder and bassist Ira Wolf Tuton—also known as Yeasayer. The video on playback is for "Ambling Alp," the first single from the band's sophomore album, *Odd Blood*. It will twist your melon, but that's the point. From the start, Yeasayer wanted to indoctrinate listeners to their spaced-out headspace, so the video—directed by their partners-in-rapsca-lion-ism Radical Friend (Kirby McClure and Julia Grigorian)—was their way of ushering their listeners down this aural rabbit hole.

"We wanted them to create a new world," declares Keating of the video directors. "We were

influenced by surrealist films and experimental directors like John Boorman [*Excalibur*, *Deliverance*], so those helped guide our way." "Ambling Alp" is Keating's favorite Yeasayer video to date. "I like the ritualistic vibe and the fact that it's kind of funny," he reveals. "My favorite sequence is when the rider shepherds all of the 'womb runners,' which is a term Kirby devised. I don't know what the fuck that means, but he kept yelling, 'Womb runners! We need the womb runners!' So now I'm going to write a song about the womb runners, though I think that sounds really pornographic."

Keating attended the Rhode Island School of Design, where he was a film major "by default." Now he's in charge of Yeasayer's aesthetic vibe—again "by default." As he prepares to launch into another story about the video shoot, he's interrupted by a courier delivering the final artwork for *Odd Blood* to his door. Keating rips open the envelope and can't contain his excitement. "Oh, cool! I don't even care if people like it, because I really like it," he gushes. "That's what I said to our label, 'You might know more about music than me, but I know about this, and this shit is awesome! We are going to fucking blow minds on this thing!'" Take one look at the green-hued portrait of a face splattered in CG craziness and tex-

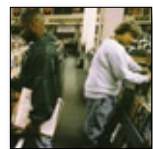
tural tomfoolery and you can't help but imagine that some consumer brains will be splattered on walls.

However, it's likely that more minds are going to be blown by Yeasayer's music. The band's 2007 debut, *All Hour Cymbals*, was almost universally loved in hipster circles, so *Odd Blood* arrives with the hype machine revved to full bore. A lot of the band's initial buzz began in the blogosphere a couple years back, where Yeasayer earned rave reviews from all corners. Unlike most new darlings, though, this band has actually lived up to the dot-com frenzy, though Keating is largely ignorant of the medium that made him. "Wait, we have a Twitter feed? I didn't know. All that stuff is a little lost on me," he says. "I can't surf the web all day, because I run out of shit to do. I inevitably end up looking at porno or watching the same stupid video over and over again on YouTube."

It's OK that Keating isn't as cyber-savvy as your average high schooler; this way, he and his Yeasayer bandmates' minds are left free to roam the musical and artistic galaxies of which most could never even dream. From the opening metal machine music of "The Children" to the uplifting closer, "Grizelda," *Odd Blood* is a tour de force, whisking listeners into the desert tent space raves of the future. Buy the ticket, take the ride. **F**

GUY AROCH

3 albums that influenced Yeasayer's Chris Keating to make music



DJ SHADOW
Endtroducing

It's phenomenal because of the way he manipulated found sounds. When I work with samples and sequences, I'm just trying to find moods like he did.



DAVID BOWIE
Low

I like the vision of the record—the "night and day" concept. One half is ambient, sparse, bleak and strange; the other is filled with two-minute pop songs.



MICHAEL JACKSON
Thriller

This is the record of my life—the one I put on all the time as a kid. I still listen to it and find myself thinking, "Wow, how did he come up with that?"

