

MEN AT QUIRK

A DECADE IN, AUSTRALIAN ELECTRO-GURUS **CUT COPY** WANT TO FREE YOUR MIND.
BY DAN CRANE. PHOTOGRAPHED BY ELEANOR STILLS

CUT COPY frontman Dan Whitford arrives at the diner inside Hollywood's Roosevelt Hotel with a sheepish look on his face and a to-go cup from one of the city's famed pour-over purveyors in his hand. Behind him is drummer Mitchell Scott, also clutching a caffeinated beverage, also with a sliver of self-consciousness. Among their inner circle, the Australian synth-pop group are teased for being coffee snobs—they do, after all, have a professional-grade espresso machine on their tour bus. But this morning their need for high-quality joe has caused them to be a few minutes late for an interview—at a diner of all places. "We're just normal people who enjoy a good cup of coffee," says Whitford in their defense. "Though, the evidence..." chimes in Scott, pointing to his cup, "is stacking up against us!"

Stimulant-fueled or no, the band is known for crafting mind-transporting yet danceable electro-pop that gets massive festival crowds bouncing in sync. Their new album, *Free Your Mind*, produced and mixed by Dave Fridmann, who's worked with Tame Impala, MGMT, and The Flaming Lips, is both tightly crafted and completely psychedelic.

Wearing its references proudly, *Free* borrows, er, freely from Primal Scream and Happy Mondays. "I was listening to a lot of early house music and U.K. acid house, some of the baggy Manchester pop, even classic

pop stuff," says Whitford. "The first track we worked on, 'Dark Corners and Mountaintops,' we were listening to John Lennon's *Mind Games* and trying to re-create its rhythms." The trippy, slightly NSFW video for the album's title track features a shirtless (and occasionally briefs-clad) Alexander Skarsgård as a cult leader who plays air basketball, conducts a baptism, barks at a dog, and goes to the bathroom, among other things.

Whitford launched Cut Copy as a solo project in 2001, added Tim Hoey on guitar and Scott on drums in 2003, and Ben Browning on bass in 2007. This is the Melbourne-based group's first album with Fridmann manning the mixing knobs, and they credit him with a

lot of the creative choices that ultimately give *Free Your Mind* its potent blend of psychedelia and dance pop. "It's a technical, as well as a creative, process. He covers that extra end of the spectrum more than a lot of people," says Scott. "A few times he'd say, 'I've done something pretty crazy with this track; it might be stupid, but you tell me,'" recounts Whitford. "And I think each time that happened, we'd go in there and say, 'What the—? That's actually pretty cool!'"

To promote the record, the band enlisted Hoey, who has a background in art, to design a series of colorful, enigmatic billboards that read FREE YOUR MIND, which were then installed in Mexico City, the Australian Outback, a small town in South Wales, Detroit, the California desert, and Santiago, Chile. Fans were instructed to trek to a billboard from where they could stream a track via their smartphone—and, of course, take a bunch of selfies.

Half art project, half promotion, the idea was intended, in part, to reflect the band's formative years, when finding new music took a little more legwork than just clicking on a link. "Often, the most rewarding experiences are the things you have to work for," says Whitford. "When we were growing up, there were a lot of records, music, and movies that you'd hear about long before they got to Australia. You'd just have to wait, or you could order them at a record store. It's great to have access to so many kinds of music now, but it also takes a little bit away from the sense of discovery."

FROM LEFT: ben browning, mitchell scott, tim hoey, and dan whitford. grooming: [thea istenes](#) at exclusive artists using oribe.

