



What do a DJ schooled in the New York disco and house underground and a virtuoso experimental guitarist who played with Captain Beefheart and Future Sound Of London have in common? In the case of Wild Rumpus — DJ Cosmo and Gary Lucas — it's a love of dance music and global grooves, as their epic debut album attests...

Words: BEN MURPHY



glorious guitar of 'Rock The Joint', featuring Beardyman, to the psychedelic Latin disco wig-out of 'Kazan', via the bluegrass reggae skank of the title track, it's a wide-eyed kaleidoscope sprawl of life-affirming, psychotropic sun-soaked majesty, a trip around the world in just over 80 minutes.

BEGINNINGS

The unifying factor is a love of dance music. Though the pair's histories are quite different, there's a backbone of funk and electronic beats in their tracks that forms the foundation of the myriad of sounds on top.

"I love dance music, I love playing along with grooves," says guitarist Gary Lucas when we call him in New York, his euphonious, calm voice flowing down the phone line. His magical guitar adds mellifluous melody and brings the Wild Rumpus sound to life. Some might be surprised he's into house and disco, but look at his history and incredibly prolific musical career to date in closer detail, and it all becomes clear. Having played with avant-garde blues visionary Captain Beefheart's Magic Band in the early '80s, after a spell working on ad music for CBS Records, he later fell into the New York mutant disco scene, promoting good friend Arthur Russell's work and helping him sign to Rough Trade Records, as well as working on some seminal rap and cut 'n' paste electro records.

"My label affiliation was with some guys at [NY label] Upside Records, they had a dance offshoot label called Logarhythm," Gary remembers. "We licensed a track of Adrian Sherwood and the Tackhead group, under the name Fats Comet, and put out 'Stormy Weather' in the United States. It was a great track with a doo-wop group mixed into the beats. I did a track for Adrian Sherwood when I started really playing again after Captain Beefheart, around '85. I was in London and we went to a studio, I overdubbed some guitar and one of the projects that came out of it was a dub album. It was a reggae dance groove. I've loved all this music so I was, 'Somebody get me a good beat!'"

Later going on to co-write some of alt.rock hero Jeff Buckley's classic album 'Grace', work with ambient techno kings Future Sound Of London, and craft Chinese 1930s pop, alternate movie soundtracks and Hungarian folk, his is a bewilderingly diverse and brilliant discography. Citizen of the world doesn't cover it.

Colleen Murphy grew up similarly open-minded about music in Framingham. At 14-years-old she was hosting her first radio show on her high school's radio station, the Strawberry Alarm Clock, as much named after its breakfast time slot and her working at local store Strawberry Records and Tapes, as the 1960s psychedelic band of the same name. Her playlists were initially composed of '50s and '60s rock, but another show Punk, Funk and Junk focused on a growing appreciation for hip-hop, punk rock and funk. Later while studying in New York City, she had shows on the highly influential college radio station WNYU.

"I was the programme director of the largest college radio station in the country, WNYU, it was very significant cos we had all these artists stopping by, doing live sets and interviews, cos we were in Manhattan, we had a great reach," Colleen recalls when we meet at a cafe in London's Bethnal Green, her enthusiasm, sense of humour and engaging stories infectiously inspiring. "I did loads of different shows there, like an evening drive show, afternoon show which was all new music, before alternative was called alternative. We were playing 'Bleach' by Nirvana [their debut album], breaking these bands and when I graduated after a short stint travelling I started producing syndicated radio shows, it went out to just over 200 college radio stations across the country, it was called Music View, it was an interview show as well as music. I interviewed Nick Cave, I interviewed Nirvana the week 'Nevermind' came out, it was that whole turning point of music, plus the early '90s hip-hop scene in New York, I interviewed Gang Starr, Pete Rock & CL Smooth, all that kind of stuff was happening, plus I was getting into the world music thing, Real World, it was a really great time."

LOFTY HEIGHTS

It's what happened around the same time that really set Colleen on the path that dictated all that's occurred since. Driven by that endless questing curiosity about music, she began going to seminal NYC happening The Loft, David Mancuso's long-running party which had proven so influential on the disco and house movements from its beginnings in the 1970s, despite being a private member's party and never describing itself as a club per se. It was an epiphany.

"I had gone to Tracks and some of the early house clubs and some of the great fun Downtown parties like Payday, to me it was just dance music for dancing," she points out. "And when I went to The Loft, I was into deep emotive music, no matter what kind of music. I had a prog rock psychedelic show as well, so it was the deeper side of the spectrum no matter what musical genre it was. Then I heard David Mancuso playing stuff I hadn't heard before, I had the same emotive sense and sense of profundity, the same kind of psychedelic thing."

Already a radio DJ, she dedicated herself to the art of DJing for a dance crowd, and as a disciple of sorts of David Mancuso's, she began to play at The Loft too.

"I was playing one part in the daytime and another part at night. They all fed into one another. One point in my career I kind of divorced them, when I started DJing more internationally, and you're doing two hours rather than the minimum of six hours which was what I usually played in New York. 12 hours at the Loft when I was filling in for David."

Wild Rumpus are rumbustious, rambunctious — and other rollicking superlatives that rrrroll off the tongue. Colleen Murphy aka DJ Cosmo and Gary Lucas are a duo hailing from the United States, each with their own incredibly colourful background in music. Colleen is from Framingham, Massachusetts, a suburb town of state capital Boston, though she's lived in London for many years. Gary is from New York City, where he still lives today.

As Wild Rumpus they swirl together their hugely varied sonic tastes. Their eclecticism knows few bounds, but it's never showy and always from a passionate place. That's certainly the case with their debut album 'Musical Blaze Up', out now on Bitches' Brew Records. From the rolling house grooves, digital dub bass and countrified,

