

EXPECTATIONS

FEATURE

54 DROWNED INSOUND



VICE BY NEVADA

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They're the start of 2010's biggest success story, with the UK at their feet, Vice By Nevada reveal their opinions on fame, touring and influences.

STANDING IN a compact underground venue in the centre of Bristol, surrounded by tattooed sceners, dirty bass beats and hardcore guitar riffs blare from every direction, destroying the ears of surrounding teens. Vice By Nevada perform their debut single 'Just Like Glass'. The single is set to be released amongst the current mire of underground dirge currently overflowing our musical baths.

By their own admission, 2009 was a 'whirlwind' year; a year which started for the band with drawnout nights jamming in drummer Adam Wood's garage, located in a town in the outskirts of Northamptonshire, then hitting the road supporting Pendulum and Chase And Status, and ending with the sextet, completed by vocalist Sophie Draper, guitarists Jake Taylor and Max Ingelido, bassist Blake Ambrose and Fraser Rene on synth, beating out the likes of Young Guns and YouMeAtSix to be heralded as undergrounds Best New Band in the 2009 DROWNED INSOUND Reader's Poll. In the past twelve months they've toured with Enter Shikari, The Blackout, Fightstar and Dead Swans and sold out five pressings (5,000 copies) of 'Just Like Glass'.

So far so good? '2009 was a great year for us. We achieved so much. Everything that we hoped would happen has pretty much come true'. And the start of the new year has seen even more success for the band. Halfway through their sellout headlining tour, Vice By Nevada receive news that their album *What Happens Behind Closed Doors*, released in December, reached number 1 in the UK charts, and even number 7 in the USA.

'The album does not only contain a fistful of explosive hits for our fans to listen to: it is far more adventurous in its scope and vision than expected. It includes intelligent, liquid forms of genre, a smash techno hit and even some well seasoned dubstep treats. Of course, as well as the hardcore tracks for our brutal fans!' claims Blake.

DESPITE THIS huge amount of success, it wasn't all that long ago that Sophie was firing off polite emails to bands herself, asking them the very same

questions that she gets asked nightly on tour. However, she got few replies. But one response stood out: Versaeremerge's vocalist Sierra Kusterbeck took the time to write a detailed reply, filling the young singer in on the machinations of the industry and offering advice on the pitfalls young bands can face. Sophie has never forgotten the gesture.

'Versaeremerge are a real inspiration to us. It's amazing how a bunch of teenagers from the middle of nowhere have become an international success. This just proves that if you have the talent and really work for it then you can achieve anything. We've already achieved so much more than we ever dreamed, but we hope this is only the beginning'.

ALTHOUGH THE band has seen nothing but success throughout the past year, it is soon discovered that it hasn't been so easy for Sophie. "How honest do you want us to be?" she asks, unprompted, as she and the rest of Vice By Nevada gather around in the back of their tour coach after the gig.

She's told us that it would be nice if she could be very honest. That is, after all, the point of interviewing her. "Okay," she replies, "I'll be very honest. I can't vouch for the rest of the guys but I'll be honest".

There is something about her concern that makes you wonder both why she's worried and just what she's got to be so honest about.

Over the course of the next hour, it emerges that the answer to the last question at least, is much. For the past year has been one of stress, worry and heartache for the young singer in particular, much of it caused by the danger of having high expectations.

Because it's about pressure that Sophie feels she ought to be honest. It was pressure that forced her into panicky inertia when trying to write the lyrics, melodies and hooks for the band's new album. And it was pressure that forced the rest of the band to consider that, if they blow it now, then "the dream is out the window", as Adam puts it.

Alongside this backdrop of stress, there was something else too for Sophie. Her relationship with her long-term boyfriend wobbled then crashed around her. She had prepared to go into the studio with

a notebook full of lyrics to record about how good her life was and how much she enjoyed touring, she had a worrying realisation: they were now all nonsense.

It's all of this, then, that Sophie is talking about when he wonders if he should be honest.

"AMERICAN BANDS are quite open about using songwriters; it seems to be quite normal, says Max. "I sit up all night with my guitar, jamming. Then you can tell when something's good because it sticks. You just have to keep working at it."

And work at it they did. They would record in Outhouse Studios with John Mitchell and Matt O'Grady each day for seven weeks and as Sophie puts it, "we spent so much time there that we lived and breathed this album".

For the singer, that may have been because she wanted to keep her mind off something else.

Sophie says her relationship with her boyfriend had been slipping away for a while. Increasingly, as she was away on tour he remained in the pair's hometown, they had been losing sight of why they were together at all. "We got to the point where we were two different people. It was just done".

So she set about re-writing all of the lyrics she had penned for the album. Gone were the songs about touring and the thrills of life on the road, replaced by tales of jealousy, anger and hurt.

THE IRONY is that, with the album recorded and the lyrics set in vinyl, Sophie and her boyfriend sorted things out. "We realised things are about compromise and trust", she says. She doesn't, however, regret the breakup. In fact, you sense, she's secretly a little bit pleased about it, given how much inspiration it lent her.

And when they stand as the interview ends, to nip out for a smoke and to rib Jake - who, it seems, is the band's whipping boy - there's a spirit about them born from a positivity Sophie must have once thought lost.

"It's because we've written the exact album we needed to pursue our crazy dreams", she says. "Right now, it's an exciting time".