



Christopher Bear (left), Chris Taylor, Daniel Rossen and Ed Droste are threatening to collaborate with Final Fantasy.

hairy pop

Bear essentials

Boston pop crew Grizzly Bear arise from bedroom hibernation **By BRYAN BORZYKOWSKI**

GRIZZLY BEAR with **TV ON THE RADIO** at the Opera House (735 Queen East), tonight (Thursday, October 12), 8 pm. \$17.50. 416-870-8000.

IT'S NOT EVERY DAY YOU MEET SOMEONE you can really, truly relate to in an interview. It's even less likely you'll connect with that person over the phone while he's in the middle of the Rocky Mountains, parked next to Zeke's Drive-in at an isolated gas station off the highway. But despite the distance, I feel really connected to Ed Droste, lead singer of Grizzly Bear.

"You watch America's Next Top Model, too?" he exclaims after I tell him that the beauty contest reality show is slotted into my regular TV-watching schedule.

"Tyra's getting kind of insane, like really insane," he says, clearly excited that someone's allowed him to ramble on about one of his favourite programs. "I liked her insanity at first, but her hair is getting more orange, and she's freaking out all the time."

Our connection doesn't end there. We both read Archie comics as kids, he also watches Project Runway, and he was on his way to becoming a journalist until his debut record, *Horn Of Plenty*, wowed indie folk fans across North America.

"I interview people still," he says.

Huh?

"Yeah, I do random music criticism under a pen name."

Yeah, like what?

"I'm not telling," he says sternly.

I keep prodding. "No. Sorry. Nope. I have multiple pen names so there's no way of tracking me down."

It's at this point that I find out he and

I do have our differences. He won't share his writing tips, and he's into guys and I prefer women. But I just assumed, since we have so much in common, that he'd be a huge Brian Wilson fan.

"Um, that's actually not correct," he says sheepishly. "I didn't grow up listening to a lot of music from the 60s and 70s, except for in car pools when people played *Led Zeppelin II* all the time."

This is really surprising. On Grizzly Bear's new record, *Yellow House* (Warp/Outside), I'd assumed that Droste was channelling the legendary Beach Boy circa 1966. The album is loaded with sweet harmonies, bizarre Smile-like arrangements and epic musical diversions. And both Droste and Wilson grew up on the coast – albeit opposite coasts.

"We'd be the Cape Cod Beach Boys, drinking Bloody Marys and freezing in the Atlantic Ocean," Droste says.

Other than their coastal connection, he doesn't really see the Beach Boys thing.

"That comes from the other guys," he says. "That's how you can tell they were an integral part in making this album."

Those "other guys" are Chris Bear, Chris Taylor and Dan Rossen, who weren't part of Grizzly Bear's original incarnation. On *Horn Of Plenty* it was just Droste making a twisted mixture of folk and ambient sounds in his bedroom.

On *Yellow House*, the group's first full-band effort, the same warped pop songwriting sensibilities remain, akin to Wilson and Syd Barrett, with a Royal City-type simplistic acoustic strumming swept into the atmospheric mix. But this time the tunes are far more fo-

cused and accessible.

This "different identity with the same name" is a testament to Droste's bandmates, and especially to Rossen, his songwriting partner.

"I love Dan's songwriting," he says. "If Dan came up with an entire album and I didn't write anything, I'd be more than happy to just sit out the next record."

Fortunately, Droste has no such plans. The Boston-raised musician is even talking about recording a tour-only EP with his new BFF, Final Fantasy.

"I talked to [Owen Pallett] the day after he won the Polaris Prize," a gushing Droste says, "but he's so self-deprecating. He said, 'My album fucking sucks. I don't deserve it.' But I think it's great."

A musical collaboration between the two wouldn't be unprecedented. When the band was recording *Yellow House* at Droste's mom's place on Martha's Vineyard, he asked Pallett to write and record the string arrangements for *Marla*, a dark, cabaretish tune penned by Droste's great aunt in the 30s.

And their friendship isn't limited to music. "Now we talk when he's not in Italy and just gossip and fag out."

As our conversation winds down, Droste's phone starts having problems.

"Keep talking, but it's about to die," he says, likely eager to hit the road and watch *Lost* on his iPod.

Before his cell conks out, though, he's got one last thing to get off his chest.

"You know, none of them really looks like a model," he says. "It's really America's Next Top Catalogue Model – someone's going to make it big in the Sears catalogue." ©

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