



NO KIDS

R&B MEETS INDIE POP

by Bryan Borzykowski

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2 pt. indie pop
1 pt. Justin Timberlake

WITH INFLUENCES like Mariah Carey, Amerie and Justin Timberlake, you'd think Canada's next big R&B band would be poised to crash *Billboard's* Hot 100 list. But not No Kids, who besides a pitch-perfect a cappella and some soulful jams, have nothing in common with their Top 40 cohorts.

You see, Nick Krgovich, Julia Chirka and Justin Kellam are actually three indie rockers from Vancouver. Until last year, they were in the acclaimed pop foursome P:ano, and R&B was nowhere in sight.

So how does a bubbly pop group start channelling Mary J. Blige?

"The Top 40 certainly comes from Nick," says Kellam, at the band's practice space. "He's hardcore into that stuff."

"I don't think that's entirely true," Krgovich shouts back.

"Maybe I was into that stuff ages ago," Kellam claims, "but it was really you."

Whoever's the rhythm-and-blues expert in the band doesn't matter much – it's safe to say that the entire group has embraced their new path. No Kids' debut disc, *Come Into My House*, is full of infectious rhythm-and-blues jams, but the sounds are also fused with P:ano's familiar pop, and it's all covered in an indie sheen.

If it sounds a bit strange, well, it is, but the band isn't doing this as a joke. "It could be shocking to a listener," says Krgovich, "but it's sincere. There's no tongue-and-cheek going on. We certainly weren't doing it to be shocking."

What they are doing is pushing themselves as musicians. It sounds simple, but Krgovich just wants to play music that interests him. "Dance pop from the late '80s and even current singles have been important," he says. "And I feel like I need to change the way I make up songs. I'm not attracted to settling into one way of working." ●



GRAND ANALOG

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE GENRE-BENDING

by Bryan Borzykowski

TRY AND THINK of a few Canadian rappers and you'll likely come up with the usuals – k-os, K'naan, Kardinal Offishall – but you might want to add a new name to the list: Odario Williams.

The Winnipeg-cum-Toronto actor and musician has been making waves as Grand Analog, a high-intensity, funk-meets-rock-meets-rap hip-hop act. It might sound a little Kanye West-like, but Williams isn't copying Top 40 hits – his sound is a product of his upbringing.

"I ran the alternative music program at Kelvin High School; my dad is a reggae DJ; and I grew up around skaters and punk-rock kids," says Williams, on the phone from his Toronto home. "And I was born into hip-hop, so I just put all these things together."

On Grand Analog's debut disc, *Calligraffiti*, it sounds as if Williams has been laying down furious raps over fuzzy riffs his whole life, but that's not the case. Until about 2005, the 'Pegger was touring the country as Mood Ruff, an act that was as close to

straight-up hip-hop as you can get.

While that group brought Williams some accolades, his work as Grand Analog has already garnered more buzz in seven months than his previous band did in eight years. Sure, the clever rhymes help, and so do the mid-tempo reggae breakdowns, but his burgeoning success can be chalked up to one thing: "The world is ready for an amalgamation of sounds," he says. "We're in the mash-up era now. Music listeners didn't know where to place genre-bending, but now they're past that. They realize people can do whatever they want."

Not only have critics and music fans matured to the point where soulful R&B can live on the same disc as old-timey blues, but seeing Grand Analog take off (he's toyed with the concept since 2002) has helped Williams grow as well. "I feel brand new," he explains. "I don't know if I'm capable of going back to straightforward hip-hop. I've finally incorporated sounds into music that I'd been longing to do for a few years. Now my brain is more focused on what's next." ●

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