



Music Feature

Snowden plow on

Atlanta indie rockers ponder life after record labels

Bryan Borzykowski

SNOWDEN with **COLOUR REVOLT** and **DIABLEROS** at Lee's Palace (529 Bloor West), Wednesday (May 21), 9 pm. \$10.50. 416-870-8000.

When Radiohead decided to circumvent the label system and let their fans pay what they wanted for *In Rainbows*, the big question, after how much money they'd make, was who would be next? Well, Atlanta's Snowden might be the answer.

While it's not official yet, the fuzzy, brooding foursome are seriously considering a Radiohead-style *pywc* release for their next album. "Is it even worth trying to sell a physical copy any more?" asks the band's lead singer, Jordan Jeffares, on the phone from his home. "Should you try to cut the costs of recording and make it back through donations or live or with licensing?"

Snowden's plan to sell music directly to fans wasn't born out of a desire to get ahead of the technological curve or to stick it to the music industry. If anything, it's a reaction to the way the industry has stuck it to them.

For the last eight months, the band has been in a nasty fight with now former label Jade Tree. Things started out okay – Snowden released their debut full-length, *Anti-Anti*, on the label in 2006 to critical acclaim – but took a turn for the worse when Jade Tree made staff changes.

"They sent out a memo that said the label was now going to be run by one employee and that the two owners who were previously involved had taken outside jobs," says Jeffares.

Jade Tree isn't Geffen, so you'd think Snowden could have got out of their record contract without engaging in a Sloan-like legal battle, but that wasn't the case. The label refused to let the band go without compensation.

So Jeffares reluctantly let the label have any future royalties from *Anti-Anti*, the band's self-titled EP and a new remix record that has yet to be released.

A few years ago this situation would have spelled the end for a small band like Snowden. But now they could potentially find greater success going the DIY route.

Though he's not exactly sure how or when Anti-Anti's follow-up will reach the masses, Jeffares can say the album will be a lot slower than its predecessor.

"My thing is that I can write moody, melancholy stuff all day long – volumes of it," he says. "But I am trying to write the upbeat stuff that a band needs to have for live shows."

Melancholy music? Label issues? Pwyc downloads? It sounds like Snowden have more in common with Radiohead than people might think. There is one major difference between the two bands, though. "If Radiohead didn't make a dime off this, they'd still have nice homes in Oxford," Jeffares says. "If we don't make a dime, we'll be in the hole. It's a bigger risk, but this is definitely becoming one of the only ways to release an album."