

Here we are today to talk about Pens From Spain, the brand new record from Loch Lomond. The elements we've come to love from the Portland band are all there, like dear old friends: engaging vocal harmonies, thoughtfully multilayered arrangements, fingerpicked guitar, chimes, bells. This time, however, drum machines and synths are back in the mix after a decade in hibernation. The title track of the same name begins with intimately paired classical guitar and bandleader Ritchie Young's understated vocal. The bar-room style choir emerges from the distance and the song veers into unexpected territory: a vintage drum machine beat drops and dubby organs give way to disco-fall strings. The song ducks deftly between genres, nimble-footed and sure, and it's clear that a new sense of self has emerged for Loch Lomond.

The album took shape in fits and starts -- most came into being at Jesse Donaldson's home studio, with additional recording at Peter Broderick's Sparkle Studio in Pacific City, OR. Some were arranged and mixed with Jenga-like fastidiousness, others have an impulsiveness, still others, room to breathe. Throughout the album these characteristics keep a fascinating tension, creating a journey for the listener.

Endowed with a powerful voice that seesaws from baritone to falsetto, Young is a study in contrasts: his slight frame belies a commanding vocal performance, and his deflecting persona doesn't hint at the simultaneously offbeat, macabre and tender lyrics. He's complemented by producer and guitarist Jesse Donaldson, vocalist Brooke Parrott, drummer Ji Tanzer (Swansea, Rebecca, Blue Cranes), keyboardist Rebecca Sanborn (Swansea, Blue Cranes), bassist Pete Bosack, multi-instrumentalist Julie Bosack, and trumpeter John Whaley (Thao & the Get Down Stay Down, Run On Sentence). On stage, they bring nearly every note of the new album to life, and add new twists and flourishes to the extensive Loch Lomond back-catalog.

Loch Lomond is a grandfather of the Portland music scene, inspiring and spawning countless other projects by its talented members. In the 10 plus years since the band formed, more than 75 musicians have at one time brought life to the evolving ensemble. It's a testament to the magnetism of Young, who has recruited the best and brightest of the community to deliver a richly imagined discography, a primer in not just "chamber-folk", but ensemble music in general. Each iteration has taken the band from strength to strength, and with new faces has come new energy, new sounds, new songs. The last few years has seen Loch Lomond's introduction to new fans through placements like "Wax & Wire" in a Red Bull BMX video featuring Danny MacAskill, which went viral and firmly placed the track as the top performing song in the HUSH Records catalog for half a decade. More recently the band was tapped to contribute four songs to the Academy Award-nominated soundtrack for stop motion masterpiece Boxtrolls from Laika Studios. In addition Loch Lomond has released a split 7" (EU) with Seattle garage rock sensation Ty Segall.