

THE NEW MUSIC JOURNALISM

Two happenings shook the music world in Sweden this summer: Michael Jackson's death and Magnus Uggla's defection from Spotify. But just when Uggla on a grand press conference in front of the gathered world press declared done with Spotify and I thought the entire music world was crashing down, a little flower started blooming right in front of me, rising from the asphalt of the music industry - a lovely little thing called Swoon.

Swoon is the magazine that makes me believe in music as a healing power and the music journalistic renaissance. It has existed a couple of years in Dumbo, Brooklyn as a fashion/art magazine, but when I visited members of the Swoon team in Manhattan in August they were just releasing their first music issue, naturally with Brooklyn as the epicenter. But no, try to put Grizzly Bear and Animal Collective behind you (they are so... February 2009).

Let me with Swoon's help give you Patrick Cleandanim, Electric Tickle Machine, Class Actress and Lights. Brooklyn's most wanted, you could say, I enjoyed all of them during my visit. Google, myspace and youtube them, in a few weeks you will be friends on that thing called Facebook.

And it is very symptomatic that a group of fashion kids with New York as a base saves music journalism. I mean, who else would do it? - - -

It took a team of arty multi talents with mixed interests, a pop-cultural X-men if you will, with different superpowers to show music journalists throughout the world how music journalism should be done. In their latest NY/LA music issue they undermine contemporary music journalism, showing with phrases and metaphors, ingeniousness and great style how the description, analysis and interview technique with an artist can and should be like. "Sophia's guitar shimmers like sheets of glass, then embarks with wild abandon on a wooly fuzzed-out solo".

So is the art of music described. Poetic, isn't it? In Sweden we just write that "it rocks hard."

In an interview Swoon's Sean Griffin asks "Men have become biologically irrelevant. How much longer can rock-and-roll patriarchy continue?"

In Sweden we're mostly interested if "the record... rocks hard?"

I've had the pleasure to get to know part of the team behind Swoon, we have gone nude swimming with Animal Collective (when they were hip in the early 1800s) partying with Dash Snow (to a while later mourn him) and baking bread with Casey Zap's deeply Jewish mother. And I got even more convinced of the response I gave in an interview with me, Jan Gradvall and Hakan Steen about music journalism, I said that the most important thing for a music journalist isn't necessarily to read the Pet Shop Boys-biography (then rather choose Frank Zappa's), but to study subjects outside the music area, like politics, sport, business, literature and history. Because good pop music is always about context.

I was alone believing this. I'm convinced that the problem with Swedish music journalism somehow lies right there.

--Carl Reinholdtson Belfrage
Nojesguiden

Translated by Ewa Josefsson