

The catharsis of screaming

She doesn't appreciate being compared. Whether it be Cat Power, Daniel Johnston or PJ Harvey. - Emma Luise "Scout" Niblett, born in the early 1970s and raised in the moorlands of Staffordshire studied Arts in Nottingham, shifting focus towards musical production in the late 90s. In 2001 she records her first album "Sweet Heart Fever" with drummer Kristian Goddard. Already her second album "I Am" is produced by Noiserock-Legend Steve Albini who previously worked with Sonic Youth, PJ Harvey and Pixies. Her reduced, almost hollowed out style, appears somehow sad and groggy only to repeatedly break out in bursts of rough voiced vocal pieces as if she just gave a damn about all that melancholic miasma.

In 2007 Marty Huber met Scout Niblett before her Vienna-gig and talked with her about idiots, the catharsis of screaming, home and good cover-versions. dr dra transcribed the interview.

Marty Huber: Let's start with your new album This Fool Can Die Now. One always says that fools and children can tell the truth. Are you trying to tell any truth, or what does it mean, when this kind of fool can die now?

Scout Niblett: (laughs) Well, the title is a reference to a lyric line in the song Kiss and it basically means, that when someone falls in love with someone so much and they love each other so much that is when they realise that they can die, that they feel that they have experienced everything.

MH: Do you like the figure of the fool because it's also something very powerful - like fools can take a voice where there is silence?

SN: To kind of allow yourself to play that part as a fool is

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fine, because you'll have this amazing experience because of it. The experience is the most important thing, so whether you are a fool or not doesn't matter and I think what I'm trying to get across is that it doesn't matter what other people think about you as long as you enjoy and get as much out of your life as possible.

MH: On your album there are themes like home, searching, desiring - and I was wondering, what home means to you, especially when you are on tour.

SN: For me home is kind of a mythical experience (laughs). I am an only child, I don't have brothers or sisters, and my mother and step-dad died. So, I don't have any family and home is something I search for. I have the feeling it has nothing to do with anything outside of me, but I still kind of want to feel that I'm going to find it in somebody else. So I desire other people or experiences or places that will make me feel like home.

MH: And a lot of people are wondering about the situation in the U.S. You moved from England to the United States. Oregon is maybe one of the most liberal states in the U.S., but how do you see developing as an artist in a political situation like it is now in the U.S.?

SN: I never bother myself with politics in a big sense. Like my whole journey is my personal politics, like how I am with myself. That's what my songs are about. I know what I don't like when I see it, but to me it doesn't affect my life. My biggest enemy is myself in my opinion.

MH: You are sometimes seen as a grandchild of grunge-music. Do you feel like a child left alone or do you see your work in a context? Does it mean anything to you to have other people in the same kind of music?

SN: It's a really weird situation I am in, because half the

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time when I read about me, people think that I'm very strange and peculiar and on my own, almost like inaccessible. And on the other half of the time they think that I sound just like PJ Harvey and Cat Power, so therefore very accessible. So, I learned not to pay attention to what people say about where I fit in. I think it's funny that you can be seen as an outcast and yet seen as someone who is totally fitting in so much that they don't even have their own identity. I do what I do, because I have to do it - it's for my mental health. And if I worried about where I fitted in, I don't think I'd be doing it. A part of what I personally do has to do with me letting things out. Like, if I didn't scream on stage every night six months of a year, I'd be in a hospital. So, to me I'd rather be on a stage (bursts out laughing).

MH: How is it to scream on stage?

SN: It's amazing! It's very therapeutic, it's very cathartic. I think I do the perfect thing for my personality, because I'm a very angry person a lot of the time and so I need to let it out in a way.

MH: I liked your song Dinosaur Egg very much, I like the poetic way of the lyrics, which you do anyway, but I was wondering how visual arts are influencing your work, or how does it inspire you? Maybe you can tell the story about Dinosaur Egg?

SN: Well, Dinosaur Egg. The album version and the single version are two different songs. In the single version the lyrics of an English artist called David Shrigley were taken. I was asked by his record label, if I would like to put his poems to a music for an album called Worried Noodles. In January I recorded three of his poems, all to the exact same music. And the one used for the album is called The Bell. And I used Dinosaur Egg for my own music, for my single. And then I added my own verses for the album. I found it very inspiring

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because he is very funny; all of his poems are amazing. They are very simple, almost naïve; that is what I admire most in art or music.

MH: You are a visual artist too ...

SN: I started out in both fields, visual arts and music. I still use a lot of my drawings in my artwork or on T-shirts and things like that. At college we were taught not to see ourselves just as a musician or just as a painter, but to mix both together. What I did for my degree was almost like a cabaret-experience. I made films and I showed them and I interacted live with the films and played music alongside it.

MH: In your live performance you also use performative things...

SN: Sometimes, ya. But sometimes I feel I just being a musician, I just play music. Sometimes I talk to the audience and ask them questions or ask if they have questions for me. My whole feeling about art and anything creative is not something you do on stage, it's actually who you are everyday. So, for example some days I wear wigs, I make my face look weird, I dress weirdly, like I dress in a costume. And that's what I do every day, just to have fun. I feel like I have to be me all the time and that comes on to stage too - it bleeds into the stage performance sometimes. I don't try to do anything on stage I wouldn't do off stage - I try to match it. To me it's all the same thing. But that's where I get to shout, that's special (giggles).

MH: You got famous, because you reduced using instruments on stage, you were doing sets only with your drums, only with guitar. Do you find it courageous to just refer to one single instrument?

SN: Yes, it feels empowering. You are on your own in one sense. I'm the only person in this body and I feel like it's

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important to express that at times. Music that moves me most is Blues-music or music when there is one person, almost crying their heart out by themselves. I use music as a way of crying. If I was surrounded by six other people on stage it would be false to me. I wouldn't be alone and therefore I would not be crying. My music is being by myself or at least not having lots of friends around me. It makes sense to me to show on stage exactly what my life is. It's just me, it's one friend, it's not a party (laughs loudly).

MH: There are two cover-versions on your new album: The River Of No Return and Comfort You. How did you choose them, is there a special relation to the songs?

SN: Both of them made sense at that time. The Marilyn-Monroe-Song is very tragic, kind of this „ ... my love going away, down the river and I will never see him again ... “ - a typical kind of love story I like. Comfort You is the opposite in a way, two people sing „ ... I'm going to be there for you, I'm not going away, I'm going to be here ... “ I've been listening to both of them a lot at home and it ended up playing them a lot at home, I thought I should try to do them as songs.

MH: Is there another cover song you would like to do?

SN: I have lots of cover songs I love. I think John Lee Hooker is my favourite performer and artist - yes, I'd like to do some of his.

MH: We are looking forward to hearing your cover versions and music tonight. Thanks for the interview. It was a pleasure.

Interview: Marty Huber

Text: dr dra

Translation of the introduction: fiber magazine

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Discographie

This Fool Can Die Now (2007)

Kidnapped By Neptune (2005)

I Am (2003)

Sweet Heart Fever (2001)