

Interview: Marissa Paternoster from Screaming Females



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Screaming Females from New Brunswick, New Jersey, have been one of the leading bands in independent music for over a decade now. Their punk sound is intensified by Marissa Paternoster's bombastic voice and impeccable guitar shredding. King Mike on bass and Jarrett Dougherty on drums create tight rhythms that serve as the fantastic foundation to the band's songs. The trio released a new album with *All at Once* back on Feb 23 [named our *Album of the Week* shortly after], and it has what it takes to be one of the top releases of the year. On Apr 8, Screaming Females will be taking the stage at AS220 for a wild time with Philly punks Hirs, Baton Rouge sludgemasters Thou and local vocals Assembly of Light Choir opening things up.

Paternoster and I had a conversation ahead of the show about the new album, focusing on instrumentation, the rise of women-fronted rock bands and what has changed the most about the band over the years.

Rob Duguay (Motif): In February, Screaming Females put out their seventh album *All at Once*. One thing that's noticeable about it is that it has more tracks than any of the other previous albums with 15. Is there anything in particular behind that or was it just having a bunch of great songs that the band wanted on the album?

Marissa Paternoster: We went in with the intention of not cutting any of the songs, but we also had a feeling that some of them might be getting cut. When we were all done, we had a moment with Matt Bayles, who produced it, about which songs might be better and which ones to take out, but we decided to keep them all on the album. All of the songs paint a great picture, so we came to a consensus pretty rapidly to not remove any of them. There wasn't a long talk about whether or not some songs were absolutely going to be cut. We very rarely do that whenever we record anything for an album, I think we did it on our debut but that was probably the only time.

RD: It's interesting because the band's previous album, *Rose Mountain* [also our *Album of the Week*], has nine songs on it and this one is a lot longer. A few of the songs have the presence of a keyboard that sounds like a church organ. Was that something that you, King Mike and Jarrett Dougherty wanted to incorporate for a long time or was it a spur of the moment decision?

MP: That keyboard is a '60s-era model so it's pretty much just an organ. I have one at home that I play

with and use for writing songs and stuff. It made sense to use one while we were tracking the album in Seattle. Matt found one for me and we used it. We've always wanted to have a great deal of instrumentation in our songs, but time never permitted us to do so. We spent a month tracking the album, so we had some time to mess around with the songs for an organic feeling, and that's what happened.

RD: I think it sounds great on the record.

MP: Thank you.

RD: You're welcome. It's been mentioned that going into the studio the band wanted to capture the spontaneity of their live performances, which can be a hard thing to achieve. Was there any difficulty with getting that right or was it relaxing with you, Mike and Jarrett letting it loose?

MP: I would say on this record that the focus wasn't really on capturing our live show and the energy. We were definitely more focused on making a studio album with different instrumentation and tones, along with using parts of the room to get different drum sounds. In our previous albums we've focused more on being a great live band, that's why we made the *Live at the Hideout* record a couple years ago. We've tracked all of our records live, but this one is definitely the one where we had more time to perfect songs, use different guitar tones and let Matt work his engineering magic with Pro Tools and stuff. He's great to work with, so we trust him to make those decisions on our behalf. Within our discography, we've wanted to make this one a complete studio album rather than have it capture us performing live.

RD: Over the past few years, there have been a lot of female-fronted rock bands starting out. Bands like Sheer Mag, Bully, Cayetana, Charly Bliss and Downtown Boys come to mind. Are there any female bands that you feel inspired by and you hope to perform with?

MP: Yeah, we're going to be on tour with a one of them actually. Hirs are like a grindcore band from Philadelphia and we're gonna go out on the road with them and a band from Baton Rouge called Thou. They've been playing shows and making music forever. They're really radical people who have a really important message, and they also happen to be a killer band.

RD: I've listened to Hirs a bit and they sound amazing. This year, 2018, marks 13 years since Screaming Females got their start while playing basement shows in New Brunswick, New Jersey. What do you think has changed the most musically with the band over the years and what do you hope the future is for the band?

MP: I think we're a lot more comfortable with being in a band with each other, making music with each other and talking about music. Someone will bring an idea that they have and we've been playing music for so long that we appreciate each other's judgment. We don't think that any of our ideas are too precious so we can bounce them off each other to see what we all think of it. I'd say that's probably the biggest change, we've never really made any rules for ourselves so we just do whatever that interests us and is fun to play.

Event, tickets: as220.org/event/screaming-females-thou-hirs-assembly-of-light-choir

Facebook event for Screaming Females, Hirs, Thou and Assembly of Light Choir @ AS220 on Apr 8: facebook.com/events/268351770355557

Web site: screamingfemales.com