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Making Music with MAKAR

Ready to rock and roll

By Jennifer Palou (Patch Poster) - (<https://patch.com/users/melissanastasi10>) April 24, 2017 1:10 pm ET
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The incredible duo of Makar have been taking over New York City as one of the prominent mainstays in the scene. Andrea DeAngelis and Mark Purnell pour their heart and soul into their music, and have become one of the most talked about and well-regarded acts, even more so over the course of the past 2 years. Ready to release their new record *Fancy Hercules* this year, we had the opportunity to sit down with Makar to discuss their upcoming endeavors.

You have a new single out right now, "America Where Are You?" What can you tell us about the new release? What fueled the inspiration? Was there any specific storyline you had for the song when writing?

Andrea: When I think about the lyrics of America Where Are You, I think about the poison of apathy. I think about how frustrated, disappointed and depressed I was about our leaders until President Obama and VP Biden. How paralyzing my own apathy was. Because if you stopped caring, the pain of what was happening to our world would dull and recede. There was this overwhelming desire to not listen to or read the news with its onslaught of escalating threat levels. An overreaction to the fact that Fox News was like the TVs in Orwell's 1984 that you can never turn off, except

in today's case, people just don't want to power down the machine and instead of monitoring us, they issue constant doomsday warnings eroding our minds and well-being. But if you click off all the news in order to breathe and live in denial, that bubble of apathy just allows wars and injustices to continue.

When I sing this song, I remember the overriding defeatism I felt in the GW years. I felt powerless in the face of organized religion where everyone else's God tells them to hurt each other as a moral right, which seems to be the very definition of madness to me. I get angry thinking about the hypocrisy of America, land of immigrants, land which we took from the Native Americans extolling freedom but only for ourselves and not for anyone else.

I was afraid of this song when we first wrote it. I was afraid to confront my total dissatisfaction, disconnection, horror and despair in the political/social aftermath of 9/11. I was afraid to put those words down on paper, worried about how they would be interpreted and misused. But even within the dark feelings this song came from, there were stirrings of hope. Hope that we will live up to the ideals of America, equality, freedom and our awesome diversity. That we will find ourselves and that this will no longer be a song of regret but an anthem of what we as Americans can achieve.

When writing music, what are your influences? How long does it typically take you to write a song? Do you keep coming back to the piece and revising?

Mark: We're heavily influenced by rock, blues, folk, Americana, punk and dance music and yes, we come back to songs and revise them all the time. Same for our literary writing. Editing and revising is an incredibly important part of crafting a song. It's a lot like a sculptor chiseling away at a piece of stone until the image in their mind is whole and in front of them. Until that point we keep coming back, chipping away or adding things, making sure lyrics are coherent, the song structure is strong and dynamic, or needs a bridge or a larger chorus or whatever. And then there's the production side of things where you might rewrite the song as you're recording it, which just happened with our song Then Never from our upcoming release Fancy Hercules. We realized it was too short for AAA radio play, so we added a whole extra section at the end to make it clock in at 2:30 instead of 2:00. An example of the medium of Radio heavily influencing the structure of our songs. We didn't expect to do that, but are actually much happier with the finished song now. There were elements we had only hinted at in the first rendition, which have been expanded and focused upon, creating more depth and excitement to the song.

At this point, Andrea and I usually come up with songs while rehearsing. We used to start a song individually then work on it collectively. Now it's the opposite. Usually we cannibalize our own chords coming up with new songs by just noodling around during practice. We just wrote a funny song called *Zombies Have Rights Too* because we're huge fans of the *Walking Dead*. The song came from noodling around with the I, IV, V chords of a song off our debut album, *99 Cent Dreams*. As soon as we heard the chords together we knew we had the beginning structure of a song, but had no idea what the lyrics would be. Then Andrea started singing them and it was one of those moments when you look at each other and get goosebumps. That's the magic of music and why we keep coming back again and again. You don't even know what you're going to create until it gets created and at that moment you are as much a fan of the work as the creator.

Andrea: The elongating of *Then Never* started with rehearsing with Livia from *The End Men*. The song being so short became very apparent to us in that moment. It was hard for a drummer or bassist to build up momentum and I could hear all the potential energy lost. Sometimes it takes a while for you to hear a song in its entirety.

The best example however that I can give of us coming back to a song is our song *Devil in a Dream*. We first recorded this song on our last album *Funeral Genius*. We left it as the original outtake recording because we could never capture the same feel as that one-off take in my parent's attic in New Jersey. When we finally started trying to play this song live it became something else and thus we are releasing it as *Devil in a Dream Part II* because it's almost a whole new song. It would be funny if we kept on releasing new variations to this song.

Inspiration can come from anywhere. I'm a very visual person so sometimes when I'm walking around the city, I see or misread a street or store sign and that becomes the impetus for a new song. That's what happened with the title tracks on *99 Cent Dreams* and on our upcoming third album, *Fancy Hercules*. Both were names of actual stores! My songwriting process can be all over the place. Mark reins me in, focusing my stream of consciousness. I think the hardest way to write a song is to come with some inflexible notion of what you want the song to be. A song always has its own ideas and you have to respect that.

Timeline wise – it's all over the place. Some songs you can dash off in a rehearsal and it remains basically unchanged when recorded. Other songs take a long time to get right. We're working on this one song now called *I Want to Be Loved* where the melody came to me in a dream but I couldn't figure out the chords for them. Months later, Mark came up with a catchy chord progression and I sang the melody over it. But we're still working on that one since it's not quite finished. *Time Flies*, another song on our upcoming album *Fancy Hercules*, was the first song MAKAR ever wrote, but the final tweaking in the writing didn't happen until this album, over a decade in the making!

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Currently to jumpstart my creative juices, I find myself flipping through D&D monster manuals. Not sure if any of those creatures will make their way into future songs, but who knows?

What are your influences musically and lyrically?

Mark: I guess to name a few would have to be The Beatles, The Velvet Underground, The Doors, Tricky, Portishead, Dandy Warhols, Goldfrapp, Ramones, Howlin' Wolf, Chuck Berry, Belle and Sebastian, Sigur Ros, Radiohead, Robert Johnson, Bowie, The Sex Pistols, Big Mama Thornton, U2, Soul II Soul, PJ Harvey, Elvis, Depeche Mode, The Replacements, Prince, The Cure, Blondie, New York Dolls, The Smiths, Otis Redding, Bob Dylan, Pulp, Aretha Franklin, Pete Seeger, Jaco Pastorius, John Cage, Charlie Parker, John Cale, Miles Davis, Susie Quatro, Sharon Van Etten, Cat Stevens and Nick Drake.

I love punk and folk music. Love its ethos of anyone can play as long as you have something to say. You don't have to be a virtuoso, you just have to love music and want to share that love of music with other people, maybe share your feelings and thoughts and connect with this beautiful world. There is something so honest about folk music and how it has spoken to the workers in songs like, Old Man River and inspired the protesters and unified the races like in Blowin' In The Wind. There's a romance to it, like in On The Road. You can see yourself being Woody Guthrie travelling along them dusty roads with a guitar in hand battling societal ills. As a sociology major that's about the most perfect music for me to write and you cross that with my love of Rock 'n Roll, blues and punk music and you get the stirrings of Makar's indie folk rockin' soul.

Andrea: Indie rock encompasses a lot of the kind of music we enjoy – punk, garage, folk, pop and blues. It's a very freeing genre overall. We like a lot of different kinds of music and combine different elements deliberately and subconsciously, but I did grow up with my family's love of Peter, Paul and Mary and Pete Seeger. I remember us all singing This Land is Your Land around the fire. So folk music was imprinted on my brain early on. And I would be remiss to not say that Riot grrrl movement was a heavy and vital influence on me.

What was the recording process like for the new record, Fancy Hercules? Did you self-produce? How long did it take to write and record the album as a whole?

Mark: We self-produce all our albums. Less cooks in the kitchen so to speak. We're currently in the middle of recording Fancy Hercules and we're doing it all backwards. Usually we write the songs, rehearse them with the band, play out live, then go into the studio. That way everyone has time to develop their parts and when we hit the studio we're super tight. We laid the drums and bass down in one day for Funeral Genius. Then Andrea and I take the tracks home to our Pro Tools setup and lay down vocals, guitar and piano.

However, for Fancy Hercules, Andrea and I are recording the final vocals, guitar and piano acoustically to a click track first. Then we're giving the final versions to our friends, Livia Ranalli, the awesome drummer for the End Men and Joe Crespo, the awesome bass player of Hello Nurse fame to practice to. Joe lives in Colorado so he'll have to learn his parts on his own. Livia, we're actually rehearsing live with in the city about once a month. When they're ready, Livia and Joe will hit the studio together after only one or two live rehearsals together with Andrea and me. They'll have to lay down their parts over the pre-recorded parts we already laid down, so it's pretty much a Makar experiment that I think is going to turn out amazing! Hopefully, our best album yet!!

Andrea: Personally, I feel looser and more willing to try different guitar overdubs and vocal harmonies than ever before. I'm finally feeling more comfortable in a recording setting. Perhaps because I feel at home as we're recording the bulk of it in our apartment.

Do you have any plans on touring or a full record this year?

Mark: Fancy Hercules, our third full-length album, will be out Fall 2017. We plan on visiting our good friend Carol Barrett on her great show, Ruby Slippers, on CIUT radio in Toronto if she'll have us and visiting some other groovy DJs in different parts of the country and world to play live in studio shows and help promote the album. We'll continue to play our weekly live show, Makar Mondays, on Periscope to help lift people's spirits at the beginning of the long work week. We're currently playing our entire catalog including the new songs, so everyone can check us out on Periscope on Mondays at 8 p.m. Watch out for us on City Bird Live sometime in May/June 2017. Once Fancy Hercules drops we'll be doing a live Periscope show of the album in its entirety on Makar Mondays.

Andrea: I hope we can do some small tours across the country, house concerts would be very cool to do. It's a challenge on a shoestring budget but MAKAR loves a challenge.

What do you hope to accomplish in 2017 with the new record and beyond?

Mark: Continue living the dream doing what we love, writing and performing music. But as far as reaching the toppermost of the musical poppermost, Makar has a few things on the burner. A few iron tips smelting over the flames. Red hot to the touch, but crucial in a clutch. As Recording Academy members, we're going to submit Fancy Hercules for Grammy consideration if we finish it by Fall 2017. We'll be continuing our weekly online Periscope shows so Makar fans spread far and wide can hear us play live. Our friend Cindy Mich, who hosts the amazing Cindy's Chat corner, is starting an Art is Alive film festival in New York on June 22nd, and asked us to perform in it at Webster Hall, so we're super excited about that. We'll also be doing a national/international AAA radio campaign starting in January 2018. And we would love to play some house concerts, so if anyone is interested in having a little folk rock duo blazing down their living room, email us at makarmusic@hotmail.com (<mailto:makarmusic@hotmail.com>) and we'll be there!

Andrea: To keep writing songs that people respond to. That's always been the most humbling and rewarding experience. To be able to do music and writing full time.

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