



Catching Up With... Apollo Sunshine

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Boston band Apollo Sunshine first appeared on the radar in 2003, when it released promising debut *Katonah*. Two years later, in 2005, the band stepped it up with an impressive **self-titled sophomore album** that wound up at #13 on *Paste's* Best Albums of the Year list. This summer, Apollo Sunshine released psychedelic opus *Shall Noise Upon*, and today the powerhouse live band kicks off its **fall tour**, with two solid months of shows scheduled for Europe and the U.S.

Paste recently caught up with AS bandmates Jeremy Black, Jesse Gallagher and Sam Cohen to talk about the new album, their almost-finished stop-motion-animation video, and hitting the road in a school bus powered by fryer grease.

Paste: Last time I saw you guys was about a year ago—you came by the office to play a few songs.

Sam: Yeah, we were on our way down to play Langerado last summer.

Paste: At that time, you were between records, you'd just done an instrumental project that you ended up shelving. With the latest album, *Shall Noise Upon*, was it a completely new project or was it taken from some of the material you'd already been working on and then developed further?

Sam: It was a new project. None of the stuff from the instrumental album made it on there—it was all more recent.

Jeremy: Actually, some of the instrumental stuff was used for the interludes on the new album.

Sam: What instrumental stuff did we use?

Jeremy: "Wolf Frog White."

Sam: Oh, that's true. The drum beat from that.

Jesse: We used about 10 seconds of a drumbeat. Yeah. [laughter]

Sam: The other two hours of material are still sitting on a shelf.

Paste: So where did you record the new album? Tell me a little bit about the sessions for *Shall Noise Upon*.

Sam: We were at this place **Old Soul Studios** in Catskills, N.Y. It's this cool studio, this guy's house really, and he [he being Kenny "The Wolf" Siegal, of the band Johnny Society] filled it with this amazing collection of instruments and good recording gear. It's his own studio. Just in the last little while, bands like us have started using it and making records there. It's a sweet, sweet place because it feels like a home—it doesn't have the typical professional-studio vibe.

Paste: What did the rest of you like about this place?

Jeremy: It was just real inspiring to be there, and have all the gear and equipment and instruments he has. It's just the kind of place you walk into and want to make music. There's something in the air when you're in there.

Jesse: It was situated in a cool area in New York. It was in the Catskill Mountains, and it was right down the street from this really nice bird sanctuary a bunch of us would go check out in the morning. And you could just get on a bike and roll around in some nature. It had an old American vibe to it.

Paste: That kind of setting, and having all these instruments around—did that shape the sound of the record?

Jeremy: Definitely. We didn't really go there with too much intention of what we were doing. I mean, I think we knew in our heads what we were gonna do, but...

Jesse: Yeah, we just let it come out as we got there and got comfortable. It was just a really nice place.

Paste: Your past records have been ambitious, but *Shall Noise Upon* feels even more so. There's all this complex instrumentation and arranging. Do you feel like you've developed as arrangers?

Sam: On this record, we just let our imaginations run wild. It was like the opposite of the other way of making a record, which is: Write the songs, rehearse and then just go in and blast it out perfectly. We were much more imagining things, considering all possibilities, and that led to, "you know what'd be great here is a whole string section, or a bunch of horns," and just going for it and indulging in every far-out idea we had. And that was the goal, to make a record that sounded like it was from all over the world at all times. And we got a bunch of friends to help us make it sound like that.

Jesse: It was great to have the support of a label [World's Fair imprint, **Headless Heroes**] that would put us in the studio for a long time. The situation, the place was just perfect—everyone had their own bedroom, it was this big-ass old house. You'd wake up in the morning and start playing a pump organ; someone would come in and plug in a Theremin. We weren't bound to the whole, "OK, I'm the bass player, you're the guitar player"—It was very much like, "let's just craft some sonic, weird shit." And the fact that we got to stay there for a long time and experiment without feeling pressured to have something coming out was nice.

Paste: How long were you there?

Sam: We were there for six weeks. We went for three weeks, and then had some time off, and then went for three more weeks. And we spent even more time on the record, amongst ourselves at home. We spent two weeks mixing it, and did more recording then. It was a long process—we had a lot of time to get it how we wanted.

Jesse: We built up and then deconstructed, and having the time to work on it like that was really cool.

Paste: Hearing the scenario, it reminds me of The Band at Big Pink.

Jesse: Yeah, I feel like it was probably similar to the way they were.

Paste: A lot of bands seem really rushed to put out new material, but you seem to really take your time.

Sam: That's an understatement! [laughs] I mean, some people are even worse than us, but we definitely take our time.

Paste: What do you think is the advantage to that?

Jesse: It doesn't seem so forced.

Sam: Nothing against bands that do make their albums real quick. I respect and admire that, as well. I'm sure someday we'll do something that way, too. But, I don't know, we just do what seems to be happening.

Paste: What else have you been up to in the last year, besides the new record? I know you live in different cities now—Jeremy in San Francisco, Jesse in Boston and Sam in New York.

Jeremy: We'd get together from time to time and do recordings. We did some recording in Boston—Jesse lives above this art gallery—and we did some recordings in Katonah, [N.Y.]. We'd work on music here and there.

Sam: Even living in different cities, three weeks is about as long we'll go without doing a show.

Paste: You have a pretty full tour schedule coming up. Looks like you're hitting it pretty hard behind this new record.

Sam: Yeah, we're getting ready to play a bunch of shows.

Paste: I heard there was this really interesting multimedia show you just played in New York. What was that all about?

Jesse: Yeah, **Monkeytown** is a spot with couches on all four sides. I don't know, I picture some sheiky Indian people with hookahs laying on couches—that style. And the entertainment sets up in the middle. So it's a really weird, intimate thing; it only holds like 50 people. But they have seven projectors and each of the four walls is a screen. Our friend **Edan**, who helped make some beats on the new record and is just a good friend of ours, has a really crazy movie collection, and he played snippets of a bunch of different movies. It wasn't something we rehearsed, but he's a very talented person and has good taste, and we just did our thing and fed off of each other.

Sam: It was a treat for the senses.

Paste: Is this multimedia approach something you might be interested in doing when you go on tour?

Jesse: Well, Monkeytown has four giant projectors, so I don't think we'll be able to do that. Plus, Edan does his own thing, so probably not. It'd be cool in an ideal world, but we're still at the stage where we're touring to make money to pay rent. I don't know if we can bring out a whole crew just yet.

Sam: Once we can get our own lighting system, though, I know who I want to build it: the guy who makes all our pedals and stuff. We sometimes daydream about set design and lights that are triggered by instruments. Maybe someday.

Jesse: If Apollo Sunshine were to make money, man, we would fucking blow minds for sure! Hopefully someday we'll get that opportunity.

Paste: Who's the guy who makes the pedals?

Sam: Well, there's two guys. The guy that originally built them is this guy Patrick who has a company called **Herscheltronics**. And lately I've been working with a friend of his, Peter Edwards, who's got this thing **Casper Electronics**, and he can build anything, he's just genius.