

Music | Bittles' Magazine: The music column from the end of the world

With the world today seemingly dominated by the stale and the dull we need our musical mavericks more than ever! Since musicians who are prepared to take chances are rarer than a politician who would refuse a bribe, those who ignore structure, sneer at genre, or confound as much as delight deserve to be cherished by all. One such artist is new *Tri Angle Records* signing **Katie Gately** whose debut LP, *Color*, will act as a soothing balm to anyone tired and angry with the lack of originality and risk-taking in modern life. By **JOHN BITTLES**

As the musical connoisseurs among you will already know, **Katie Gately** first came to prominence through her self-titled cassette from 2013. The tape, together with her celebrated contribution to *FatCat Records*, split single caused even the most po-faced of hipster to lose their cool. Taking the pop template, elongating it, mutating it, and showing it general disrespect, tracks like *Pivot*, *Last Day* and *Dead Referee* stood out from the glut of musical wallpaper assaulting the ears. A remix of **Björk's** track *Family*, taken from the *Vulnicura* album, further cemented **Katie Gately's** status among those with an ear for the new. Surreal and unsettling, over seven heavenly minutes **Björk's** voice is lovingly tortured, dehumanised and set over a mixture of hushed beats, screeching electronics and uneasy ambiance to create a remix which is haunting, brutal and surprisingly beautiful.



The artist returns this October with the release of her long awaited debut LP. *Color* is, perhaps, her most accessible work yet, its pop touches and playful vocals pushed firmly to the fore. Songs such as *Tuck*, *Sift* and *Frisk* sound a little like how music might have developed from the 80s if it followed the example of bands like **Talking Heads** rather than **Stock Aitken Waterman**. Yet, there is still more than enough discordance, noise and mischief making to be found here to make *Color* resonate with long term fans. Opener, *Lift* chops up Katie's vocals over a percussive barrage, *Rive* sounds like a torch song gone wrong in the best possible way, while the nine minute long title track closes things on a spine-tingling high.

With *Color* having just arrived on record store shelves the time seemed right to grill **Katie Gately** about, amongst other things, the album, noisy-noises, being rejected by the preppy kids, pop music, working with *Tri Angle Records*, found sounds, and how all of us are mediocre sometimes.

So grab yourself some headphones, turn the volume up high, click [here](#) to hear some tracks from the album, and let us begin...

By way of introduction, can you tell us a bit about who you are and what you do?

Hi. I'm Katie and I make noisy-noises behind my computer.

Your debut album *Color* came out on the 14th of October. For those who haven't heard your music before, what can they expect?

Harmonies, melodies, stacks of sound, screeches/drones, screams/moans.

If you had to pick one song to sell the album, which would it be and why?

EEK, I would definitely leave this selling job to someone else! If I had to play one song to a group of people though, I'd play *Rive*. It's the first song I made for the record and somewhat conventional while still demented.

Opening track *Lift* is a mix of pop melodies, treated vocals and maximalist production and starts the record in style. In the press release you suggest that "it's always about how much can I add before it just sounds crazy". How do you know when enough is enough?

I don't! My threshold for pain and craziness is very high so I try to just please my own brain first. In doing so, I hope to connect with other people who have a similar chemical make-up and/or aesthetic sensibility.

One of my faves from the record, *Tuck*, is light, playful, and reminds me a little of **Grimes**, or early **Madonna**. It contains pop hooks and melodies galore. How big an influence is 'pop' to the music that you make?

I am most excited by pop structures (verse chorus and deviations from there) but I like to challenge conventional timbres and instrumentation. The best analogy I can think of is....I want to live in a house with four walls, a ceiling and a floor because I need boundaries and enjoy security! However, I do not want white walls and beige wood floors. Instead, how about weird, flashy wallpaper and green, furry rugs...?



Many of the tracks feature your own vocals over found sounds and experimental beats. What is the starting point for you when creating a song?

Usually a weird ugly noise lures me in and I will want to sing along with it and highlight its beauty. I do a lot of EQ carving....hunting for the tonal qualities in the most gnarly, crunchy sounds. There is almost always something tonal and melodic hidden inside every found sound.

Speaking of found sounds. What's the strangest, or most surprising thing on the album?

Hmm, well one of the strange ones comes from an accidental recording I made. That is the noise that bursts through on the beginning of the track *Sift*. I don't know what that sound is! I just found it on my field recorder and used it.

The nine minute title track closes *Color* with a beautifully melancholic air. Can you tell us a bit about how it came about?

That one came out rather quickly in one burst. I started processing crying baby sounds as the background elements and it made it easy to make a song about loneliness.

The album is coming out on Tri Angle Records. How did you first hook up with them?

Through the internets!

How well do you think Color sits within the traditional Tri Angle sound?

I don't know. It's very hard for me to be objective about my work and how it compares. But I've been a fan of the label from the beginning - not because of a predictable sound, more because of the intensely good curation.

Are you planning on touring the album at all?

I'm starting to think about things for next year but nothing soon. I need quite a bit of time to translate my work into a live setting as there's so much CPU involved and I only have two hands. I will definitely look insane performing this live, but that will be that!

You came to a lot of people's attention two years ago with the haunted ambience of Pivot, which featured in Fat Cat Records' series of split EPs. What was the idea behind this particular song?

I wanted to create a thorough love song - one with many contradictory chapters. I did not want the song to behave.

My first introduction to your music came through your remix of Family from Björk's Vulnicura album. How did that come about?

Robin Carolan from my label introduced my music to **Björk**. She emailed me and asked if I might remix a track from *Vulnicura*. I was extremely excited to have this opportunity and it was the most fun I've ever had making anything, ever. Pure bliss.

How did you first get into music?

In high school. I was rejected by the preppy kids so I retreated into my headphones. It was a wonderful fantasy world to live in - a real safe space.

And what was it that made you decide to become a musician yourself?

It wasn't a decision really, I woke up one day and just had to make music!

What advice would you give any wannabe producers out there?

Don't be afraid of being mediocre....every single human on the planet is mediocre sometimes. Everyone! So don't edit yourself before you start making something fully fleshed out. It's okay to fix up the warts and bumps later on....in the beginning though, it's like love...it should feel good!

Which three albums should everybody in the world hear?

The questions is mean! I couldn't even narrow this down to 10 records... let alone 3. Here are three I love but I'd never force them on anyone:

Joanna Newsom - *Ys*.

The For Carnation - *S/T*.

Dr. Octagon - *Dr. Octagonecologist*.

Do you have any final words for our readers?

Thank you for reading!

Color is available now and is pretty much guaranteed to brighten up anybody's day!

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)

| Photos: JASMINE SAFAEIAN