



JAPANDROIDS



IMAGY BASSOUNI

WORDS JOHN LUCAS

When Dave Prowse uses the word “epic” to describe his band’s music, he doesn’t mean that you have to be versed in the Emerson, Lake & Palmer catalogue or possess a deep fondness for 12-minute guitar solos to appreciate it. The Japandroids’ drummer-vocalist just means that, in spite of their punkish energy, the songs he and singer-guitarist Brian King create together have a bit more to them than the average three-chord thrasher.

“As we tried to write shorter songs, we realized that it’s not really our style, because on every song we want to have a 30-second intro, a 30-second outro, some sort of instrumental part in it, and three choruses, at least,” Prowse says, reached by phone en route to a music festival in England. “You can’t really fit all that stuff into a two-minute song. It just so happens that all of our songs end up being four-and-a-half, five minutes. And they’re all kind of at 10 all the way through.”

Actually, with apologies to Spinal Tap, Japandroids keeps it cranked to 11 for the duration of its second album, *Celebration Rock*. For just two guys, King and Prowse can make a hell of a racket, laying down a wall of slash-and-burn guitar and hammer-of-the-gods drum pummelling in service of numbers like “The Nights of Wine

and Roses” and “Younger Us.” Bristling with explosive, shout-along choruses and pounding rhythms, this is a collection that, while it does indeed sound like a celebration, brings a potent dose of well-past-adolescent angst to the party. And if you were making a mix tape to play at said party, you might slot a Japandroids cut between tunes by No Age and the Replacements.

Celebration Rock is the Vancouver-based band’s follow-up to its 2009 full-length debut, *Post-Nothing*. The second album contains the same number of tracks as the first, and is the same length, give or take a few seconds. This, Prowse notes, is by design: “I think eight songs—you know, 35 minutes—is probably a good dose of our band for people. I think that’s probably as much as they want to hear in one sitting.”

Whether the drummer is being too modest or is not open to debate, this much is certain: *Celebration Rock* is an adrenaline-jacked collection that showcases Japandroids’ unwavering dedication to firing-on-all-cylinders intensity. “It is pretty relentless,” Prowse admits. “It can get to be a bit of an exhausting listening experience.”

Exhaustion is something Prowse and King know a little something about from life on tour. Their

current trip will keep them away from home for over four months. Prowse says the knowledge that they would be on the road for so long—plus some sage advice from their recording engineer—had a big part in shaping their latest batch of songs.

“Jesse Gander had this great line when he was recording our album,” he recalls. “Whenever he thought that we were getting pretty close to nailing a take of something, he’d say, ‘OK, guys, I think this is the one. You’re never gonna have to play this song ever again after this—except for every day of your life on tour.’ That was something we were very aware of. We had to like these songs a lot and feel really proud of them because we knew they were going to be everywhere. When we made *Post-Nothing*, we were just making a record for ourselves. With this one, we knew we were going to be playing it every night. So we were striving for every song to be pretty epic and interesting for us to play; also hopefully songs that people who like our band would like, and have a really great live energy to them. That’s what we were going for.”

In that case, mission accomplished.