

DRAGONETTE

When asked to sum up the history of her band in a nutshell, Dragonette vocalist Martina Sorbara succinctly spells out the somewhat improbable backstory as such: “Husband and wife from Canada started a band, moved to England, made pop music, experience a lot of crazy ups and downs, move back to Canada and continue to be a pop band...but finally in the way they wanted to from the very beginning.” It’s a wildly truncated version of the crazy ride that the band has been on for the past few years, but Sorbara manages to nail the important bits. For the better part of a decade now, the band— Sorbara, her husband Dan Kurtz and drummer Joel Stouffer—have been making the kind of wily pop music that routinely defies explanation (and expectations).

Releasing their debut EP in 2005, Sorbara and Kurtz very famously opened for New Order on only their second gig. Based on the success of the EP (and the interest from labels in the UK), the two eventually pulled up stakes and moved to the UK to record their debut album. What was initially conceived as perhaps only a temporary move turned into a tenure of seven years in London, during which the band racked made a name for themselves as a synth-pop act to be reckoned with. Their debut full-length, 2007’s *Galore*, put the band on the road with the likes of Basement Jaxx and saw the group developing their chops as a formidable live act.

“In London we felt very miniscule, like two tiny people adrift in this big, dark city,” explains Sorbara, “It sounds negative, but I mean it in a positive way. Away from our roots and our families, London felt like this alternate reality. It disconnected us enough from our past that we could actually start from nothing—we could build ourselves up musically and professionally from this totally blank slate. At the time, everything in the UK was about indie-rock and we were this band making electro-pop. In retrospect, our oddness kind of helped us. When we first moved there, we were just an idea of something—a concept—but it took a while for those ideas to solidify into the reality of what we are now.”

In 2010 Dragonette released *Fixin to Thrill*, a sonic step forward for the band that included the singles “EASY” and “Pick up the Phone.” Switching labels and taking their career into their own hands, the band felt a definite turning point when they began touring. “I remember suddenly realizing, oh my god...we have fans!” recalls Sorbara. “And it was something we’d accomplished totally on our own, which felt really good. “

It was just as the band prepared to head home from tour and begin work on a new album that their collaboration with DJ Martin Solveig—a little song called “Hello”—

started to take the world by storm. Eventually the song would sell over 3.5 million copies around the world, including over 1 million copies in the US alone. The track would earn them a Juno award back in their native Canada and forever alter the course of their career. “We were suddenly thrown into this world that we’d never even tried to be a part of, which was both awesome and weird,” says Sorbara. “People got this distorted idea of Dragonette as being a purely a dance band, which wasn’t necessarily what we were trying to do.”

For the making of their new album, 2012’s *Bodyparts*, the band decamped briefly to Rio de Janeiro to write new music. The album, which was ultimately recorded on three separate continents, is the most fully realized and hyper-dynamic of the band’s career. At a time when people expected Dragonette to go full-force towards dance music, the band chose to creatively zig-zag. Equal parts dance-floor bravado and rock and roll ass-kickery, *Bodyparts* is a fitting document for a band that seems to have finally come into their own. Tracks like “Live in this City” and “Let it Go” are arguably the most jubilant things the band has ever recorded, particularly the latter which seems to give voice to the liberation that Sorbara has been searching for since the earliest days of the band’s career.

“There was a day when I had this moment of clarity,” she says. “It was no longer about having to participate in someone else’s idea of what we should be doing or what someone else’s perception of what a pop band should be, or what a female front woman should be. I started to trust and pay attention to who we are as people and focus on what is interesting about we do. It’s not about trying to fit in to a system that is already in place. There was a relief involved when we got back to trying to just please ourselves, and I think you can hear that on the record. We are uncommitted to just being one thing. We are distractible in terms of what genre we are supposed to be. Also, I don’t think we’re really capable of sticking to one thing...and it’s not something we’re interested in. We just want to do everything, all the time.”

Dragonette will spend much of 2013 bringing jams to the masses. *Bodyparts* is out now.