

[It was with the thought in mind that there was no one who loved music quite like me writing about it, that I headed to Zilker Park in Austin, Texas this October to not just change the face of the musical press, but to also gay up the joint a bit. I was able to speak to some of the musical acts I have identified with over quite some time, and this is the result of these adventures: *Musicians Are Your Friends, Too*. *MAYF2* aims to provide the answers to every question you've ever wanted to ask to the musicians you admire.]

Musicians Are Your Friends, Too: 2010 Austin City Limits Edition
LOCAL NATIVES

Local Natives are an indie/psychedelic rock outfit from Silver Lake, California. The members are Taylor Rice, Kelcey Ayer, Ryan Hahn, Andy Hamm and Matt Frazier. The guys have been friends since high school, and in December 2008, they moved into a house and began crafting tunes for their debut album, which they self-funded. Named after the house, "Gorilla Manor" was originally released in the United Kingdom in November 2009, and later released in the U.S. in February 2010. It debuted on the Billboard 200 chart and at #3 in the New Artist Chart. Suddenly, the five friends from Silver Lake were indie darlings, playing massive gigs like the Fuji Rock Festival, Pitchfork Festival, South by Southwest and 2010 Austin City Limits, where I met the band.

Here to prove musicians are your friends, too, is Andy Hamm, bassist for Local Natives.

Kristina Villarini (KV): I'm here in sunny Austin, Texas for 2010 Austin City Limits, and I'm joined by Andy Hamm of Local Natives! First and foremost, Andy, thanks for the interview.

Andy Hamm (AH): Of course!

KV: Who are you most looking forward to seeing, or who did you want to see at Austin City Limits?

AH: For today [Saturday], I have... Well, I missed Bear in Heaven... We're friends with those guys and we love their music.

KV: Well, I interviewed Jon (of Bear in Heaven) yesterday...

AH: Oh, you did? Yeah?

KV: He had a lot of nice things to say about Local Natives.

AH: Well, they played about a half-hour ago, and I missed it... Because I was doing interviews!

KV: One of the unmentioned perks of this gig is missing out on your friends playing festivals.

AH: [Laughs] I also want to see the Black Lips, the xx are a bit later on, and who is headlining?

KV: Well, Muse and M.I.A. are battling it out tonight.

AH: I've seen Muse, so I'll check out M.I.A.

KV: Alright, so let's discuss the record, which is huge. There are so many elements to *Gorilla*

Manor's songs. I listen to it often and I still hear something new every time. So, what is the collaborative process for you guys? Do you just jam?

AH: Yeah, I guess as typical or cheesy as that sounds, that is how it goes. It really is just: the song usually originates with one member, and then turns into something completely different. It is all of us; in the... Wherever we're rehearsing--just working parts out and all trying to add something. You know, it's a tedious process at times, but at other times, it's also a natural, quick thing.

KV: What are the challenges of working with friends? Some of you guys have known each other for such a long time.

AH: It has been hard, yeah. It's definitely not all sugar plums and cupcakes. You're friends, but you're also trying to do this thing that you hold so close to you—which is, maybe it's a song you came up with or whatever it is. But we're still learning, as a group, even today, how to deal with that... It keeps getting better and better as we move forward.

KV: How do Local Natives decide the setlist for a show?

AH: We usually wait until five or ten minutes before the actual show. [Laughs] And then we'll argue about it for a while and wonder, 'why didn't we talk about this two hours ago?'

KV: But in that way it's oddly organic, and you find out if there's something you all really want to play.

AH: Yeah! Well, we sort of have a set that the majority of the band like to play, so that's usually what we'll play. And then every so often, someone will get a crazy hair and say 'okay! Let's try something different for once,' and then we'll argue about it again. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

KV: Any songs that Local Natives want to cover (besides for the Talking Heads cover on the album)?

AH: We have the Talking Heads cover, so we always play that at shows. Since we only play forty-five minutes to an hour, we try not to play any more covers in our set. Then it's like, 'oh, we don't want to have two covers in one set!' But we've recorded a cover of a Televisions' song that came because of the Talking Heads' cover.

KV: Did you ever feel like, during the process for *Gorilla Manor*, that maybe you guys were creating something special? Like, 'Whoa, maybe we have something here?'

AH: Yeah, I think that you have to have a certain level of confidence. You're putting yourself out there. I remember, about halfway through the recording process where, I was thinking, 'ahh, we have the songs now! Now what do we do with it?' That was a really reassuring feeling, because we had written a lot before that and we had played together for years, but it was always a half-ass thing, and none of us were always 100% confident behind the music. The songs on *Gorilla Manor*, everybody across the board thought, 'this is who we are, so let's really push it.'

KV: If there were any songs within the last year, that you wish that you were musically involved in, played on, or wrote, what are they?

AH: Oh man! I think about that all of the time. I have to pick just one song?

KV: Just one!

AH: [Groans] But I do think about it a lot! I remember as a senior in high school, "Paranoid Android" by Radiohead came out and I was playing the bass, but I had just started to move into listening to more singer/songwriter and indie-style music. I was such a huge punk and metal head up-to-that point. But the bass-line and rhythm section of that song, was such a big thing. I realized that [rhythm and bass] could be really energetic, experimental and edgy but relate-able, and those sounds don't have to come from an extreme band. I guess that's a typical answer, but it really opened my eyes in a lot of ways.

KV: You can never go wrong with a Radiohead song, Andy. Thanks for the interview! I'm looking forward to seeing your set at ACL!

AH: Thank you very much!

Andy and the rest of the band were class-acts. After the interview, when I asked him about signing my Local Natives t-shirt after their performance was over, he laughed and suggested I just hand it over there (in the Media Tent) so I wouldn't have to wait in line. Very cool of him, but I did go out and wait like all the other fans! You can find out more info about the guys at: www.thelocalnatives.com/