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## Sleep Study



12th Annual Indie / Alt. Rock Song Nominee



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Record Label: Simon Recordings  
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**Home Base:** Minneapolis, MN

**Genre:** Indie rock/power-pop

**Categories Entered:** Indie/Alt. Rock Song

**Work Submitted:** "Flower Girl"

**Artists Featured:** Sleep Study

**Label:** Simon Recordings

*\*Answers submitted by Ryan Plewacki (vocals/guitar)*

**Who are your influences?:** We're mostly inspired by the British Invasion bands of the 60's and English post-punk bands of the 70's. If we had to site some specifics, we'd be looking at Robyn Hitchcock and The Beatles. But it's not fair to say you're influenced by The Beatles. Who isn't?

**Describe your nominated work:** It's funny that "Flower Girl" became the single off of the record. It's actually a very serious song about the ethnocentricity of the United States. We were inspired by "American Woman" by The Guess Who, which put a face on a series of concerns about the United States' part in The Vietnam War. Here we are 44 years later and we believe that song is still relevant. We're still a country who believes we are the center of the universe, but a country never seems to look at itself long enough to realize that it's rather ineffective. And, to be clear, this song isn't anti-American. If anything, we're taking ownership as concerned citizens.

**Did you use any unusual effects or instruments in this recording?:** Cory, our keyboardist included a series of female screams in the bridge, the first being the most obvious. We were trying to channel the damsel in distress of the early horror movies. This adds to the duality of our character and augments the chaos we were trying to convey.

**Were there any happy accidents while in the studio, or did everything go as planned?:** There are always happy accidents! In this tune the instrumental bridge was supposed to be one guitar part. I went in to double it to thicken it up, lost my train of thought and slid down the fret board in defeat. It just happened to be in key. Our co-producer, Adam Levy, stood up and mouthed "THAT!" Now it's harmonized.

**How did you raise the funds for this project? How long do you expect it will take to recoup your out-of-pocket recording expenses?:** Putting money together for this record was a challenge. We had only been a band for about six months and hadn't built up much savings from playing gigs. It came down to a lot of barbers, money out of our pockets, and doing a great deal of it ourselves. We honestly don't think about recouping. With

the way things are going in the industry right now, it's not even fair to talk about that. We hope to pay back our label for their portion and want to be in good standing before we go back in to do the next one. That's the best we can hope for.

**Why did you choose to submit this work to The 12th IMAs?:** We thought we'd give it a shot. When we started working on this record, we weren't really sure if anyone would even like it. We really made this record for us. We were certain that it wasn't a mainstream project and the IMA's are anything but. Seemed like it might be a good fit.

**What's your definition of success and how will you know when you've achieved it?:** That's a tough question and I think every member of the band would answer it differently. Currently, three of the four of us play music for a living and we're really grateful for that. However, our trip to SXSW this year nearly tanked our savings. I think success would be having the financial freedom to be involved in events and projects that we don't rely on financially. You know, the ability to say "yes" to something that interests us without having to follow up by asking how much it pays.

**How will you leverage your IMA honors to achieve your career goals?:** Well, the honor of being included is huge. We'll keep wearing that badge proudly.

**Who's sitting in your audience and what makes your fans unique?:** Of all the bands I've played in, the small following that this band has earned is the funniest. I literally do not know how to even describe it. We seem to have younger college kids and thirty-somethings finding us after shows. But we'll also get emails from people who are significantly older than us. For a while we were highlighted on a power-pop message board in Spain and were getting facebook messages that we had to translate.



Listen, power-pop isn't very cool. Most people look at it as kind of dorky, because it is. Power-pop will always ride in the background with a select few dedicated followers. I mean, groups like Jellyfish and The Grays were incredible bands, but Nirvana was king in the 90's. But that doesn't change the fact that I still talk to people who hold the Jason Falkner torch burning bright. Right now, Radiohead is king and they're doing a damn good job of it. But there are still kids out there whose ears get perked when they hear a dorky melody. We're here for those kids.

**What is your guilty pleasure on the road? Any close calls or mishaps while on tour?:** I'm not sure we have any guilty pleasures. We listen to a lot of podcasts on the road. The Bugle is one that dominates the van iPod.

Tour wouldn't be tour without mishaps! This year at SXSW, we were in Kansas City the night before and scheduled to arrive in Austin at 8pm for a 10pm set. Somehow, we ended up pulling into Austin at around 9:45pm. Our gig was on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, which is kind of like Mardi Gras at night. We had to pay \$40 for parking that was eight blocks from the venue. Then we had to strap all of our gear on our backs while trying to get through the insane crowds of people (who were not sympathetic to our situation at all). At one point we looked back to realize that we had lost our keyboard player, "Man down!" We decided to keep going and go back for him later, an entirely different story altogether. By the time we got to the venue we were shaking with adrenaline and muscle twitches, sweat dripping down our red faces, and every other word we puffed out was "fck". The promoter was screaming, "You have 60 seconds to get on! I'm not kidding!"

By the time we got rolling with our first tune, our keyboardist wasn't even set up yet. I was thinking that it was the end. I was so sure that after our set, this band was going to break up. And just then, like some sort of inebriated angel, a drunken girl emerged from the packed room and jumped on stage with us. As she passed by me on stage, she said, "Welcome to Austin." And somehow, that made everything ok. We were hurting for the rest of the weekend, but no one in the van talked about that evening negatively.

**Who are your musical heroes & influences?:** I love and hate this question. You'd think I'd be better equipped to handle it at this point, but I'm not. What isn't an influence? I feel pretty fortunate to have grown up in Minneapolis. It may be surprising to people outside of here, but we have a really diverse music scene, incredible radio, and a general interest in what is going on in the rest of the world. To top that off, I spent a few years living in New York and was exposed to a great deal more.

On a personal level, I've always been fascinated with the "British Invasion" bands. It's also no secret that I have a potentially unhealthy Beatles obsession. For example, I had a replica of the Ed Sullivan suit made for my wedding. But, if you play popular music, the Beatles influences you whether you like it or not. Anyone who denies that fact is full of it and totally delusional for no good reason. So it's not entirely fair to list The Beatles as an influence. But I digress...

I've always dug deeper into all of the bands from that era, groups like The Kinks, Spencer Davis, Troggs, Yardbirds, Zombies, Hollies, Peter and Gordon, Chad and Jeremy, Wayne Fontana and the Mindbenders and the like. I've been obsessed with that stuff since I was a kid. I've also always been drawn to a lot of the new wave groups and specifically bands like Tears for Fears, Depeche Mode, Duran Duran, and The Smiths.

Somehow, when I tie all of that together I come to Robyn Hitchcock. My life changed when I heard Robyn for the first time. Easily, my most vulnerable moment was standing in front of him, as we were about to take a stage he had just left. I had no words. Instead, I sheepishly held a copy of our record out in front of me and said, "This is for you". He looked at me, shoved the disc in his back pocket and turned around to talk to other people who could manage to form words.

**Are there any songs you wish you wrote and why?:** "Bohemian Rhapsody" hands down. I don't think that even needs explanation.

**What artists are you listening to that would surprise your fans?:** Every once in awhile my love for British heavy metal comes up in conversation and shocks people. I am a HUGE Iron Maiden fan. I sometimes stray from the British metal and geek out to Stryper. Yes, Stryper, the Christian hair metal band from the 80's. Well, they're actually still going. I've seen them twice and they put on the most killer live show. That being said, the new Justin Timberlake record has been on my player constantly since it came out. It's easily one of the best pop records of this decade.

**How do you discover new music? Do you buy music or are you content with streaming?:** I don't get to listen to as much as I used to. I kind of gave up on trying to keep up with the millions of bands out there. It's a daunting task. However, in Minneapolis we have a radio station called The Current that plays a great deal of unsigned music and no top 40 stuff. I'm able to get my ears around some cool music just by tuning that station on. I also stream KEXP when I can.

I may be old fashioned, but I need to own music. I love buying physical product, even though I just load it into my iPod. But I own it. There's something about holding it in my hand and putting it away on a shelf that I just can't get rid of. Streaming is fine, but I don't get the same thing out of it.

**How will musicians make a living if fans continue to expect music to be free?:** The industry is going to turn itself around. It always does. The kind of chaos that we're feeling right now isn't new. Our label President pointed out that this cycle has gone on for ages, starting with the printing press, then on to piano rolls, recordable cassettes, radio even. We'll pull out of it. I don't know how, but it will happen. When it does, those of us who have hung on will be there and we'll make money again.

**What don't fans/audiences understand about the music industry today?:** I don't subscribe to the idea that the average person doesn't understand the industry. I think people have a pretty good idea of how it works, or doesn't work. I don't think it's a lack of understanding that drives piracy and the other hardships that musicians complain about. I think people know exactly what they are doing when they torrent a record. But I think genuine music fans also understand the industry and choose to carry it on. I believe that those who truly recognize that it's a tough and erratic business are the ones who make sure that they have a \$20 bill in their pocket when they go to shows so that they can buy merch. It's those people who keep record stores alive and bands on the road. It's easy to protest those who grab freebies; we need to be spending more time thanking those who are keeping the industry afloat. They're heroes.

**Are digital singles/EPs vs. full albums the future?:** Maybe for some, but not for others. The nice thing about the way the industry works right now is that we can make that decision. A hybrid might be a great option too. None of these ideas are new. I can't even count the number of rare Smiths singles and EP's that are floating around record stores all over the planet. The entire punk scene was built on 7" records. We do what we can afford. If a band has something that they are itching to get out, they'll get it out by whatever means possible.

**Finish this sentence: The music industry is...** a crazy, painful, and overwhelmingly satisfying business. Those of us who do it, do it because we are either masochists or we love it too much to give it up. This industry is packed with such great talent and resiliency when meeting terrified money holders and investors. It's one of the few businesses where everyone, every single person involved, gets knocked down daily only to raise back up and ask for another. It's a beautiful thing.

**What do you have in the works for the upcoming year?:** We're going to tour this record and do some more festivals. In our spare time we're going to start working on our follow-up record. With the batch of tunes we have right now, we're really excited for it.

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