

Dark Rock Trio L.A. Witch Found Their Mojo on the Road

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

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L.A. Witch

Marco Hernandez

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It's been four years since *L.A. Weekly* last hung out with **L.A. Witch**. Back then, the trio had just released an eponymous debut EP with no manager or label. A lot has changed since then. The three women (Sade Sanchez, Irita Pai and Ellie English) all quit their day jobs and threw themselves onto the road full force. For the past two years in particular, they've barely been off tour. It was during skipping into the studio to record a self-titled debut album, which arrives next week.

"We learned a lot, and it's still a learning process for us," Sanchez says. "We didn't know what we were doing, especially then. We still don't know exactly what we're doing. But it's been a lot of fun, and it's also what we have always wanted to do." For Sanchez, quitting her day job to focus on music full-time was especially revelatory. "I'm broke, but I realize that I'm free. I'm able to create and tour, write songs and be with my best friends, and I think that's just worth sacrificing a normal life for."

A band like **L.A. Witch** sound like they belong on the road. While comparisons to Joan Jett have flowed in their direction – because, y'know, girls in black playing rock & roll – their desert-rock psychedelia is more reminiscent of The Doors when Jim was at his highest, or early Dinosaur Jr. The great news is that, while they've evolved and grown together since forming, they haven't lost any of the gloriously untamed qualities that made their music so attractive from the outset.

"Ellie and I have been playing for at least 10 years, and we play every single night and get more and more comfortable onstage," Sanchez says. "We're all learning the process of writing. When we first started, we weren't writing songs with an intention to write an album. That's one huge thing that all of us have learned about. Now we know that we're writing these songs because they're probably going to go on an album. I think that definitely helps when it comes to things like having a concept or a theme. I'm not saying that there needs to be that, but I think that it's something that we've realized."



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The album, which will come out on **Suicide Squeeze Records** out of Seattle, was recorded at Hurley Studios in Costa Mesa with engineer Jon Berry. The band didn't employ a producer as such, preferring to work on it themselves and get advice from knowledgeable friends when they needed it. Essentially, they learned on the job.

"We were really involved in the whole process of producing and mixing it ourselves on this particular album," Pai says. "We were able to sit down and figure out what we were happy with."

"I don't know if you're always 100 percent happy with what you do," Sanchez says. "You're your own worst critic. I feel like I can always hear something that I should have done faster or slower or that was out of tune. Or I could have added another melody. Recording can be a very hard process, especially if you don't have a lot of experience doing it. For us, we're still very new to it. But I think overall we're very happy to finally have it done and we're excited to get it out, and we're excited for the next album."

On Thursday, Aug. 31, L.A. Witch will play a free release show for the album at Levitt Pavilion in MacArthur Park. "We have our friend Samantha Strange DJing, and another friend doing a lot of VHS visuals," Pai says. "We're really excited. And we have Frankie & the Witch Fingers playing, so it'll be a witchy theme."

With the show done and the record out, L.A. Witch will be heading over to Europe and then Australia for the fall and early winter months. When they return to the United States, they'll be back out on the road again, as adventure beckons.

"A lot of good things are to come," Sanchez declares.

L.A. Witch plays with Frankie & the Witch Fingers on Thursday, Aug. 31, at Levitt Pavilion.

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