

## NIGHTLIFE

## Q&amp;A

Sonic textures

## Behind the scenes with Asobi Seksu

Yuki Chikudate adores her orange tabby, Sammy, and she has nothing against animal lovers who maintain Twitter accounts for their pets.

"But I don't ever want to be so presumptuous as to say that I know what his life is like," says the vocalist-keyboardist for 4AD-ish duo Asobi Seksu, who posts cute Sammy photos on the group's website. "So I don't want to tweet or blog for him because he might be offended by that, and I really don't know what it's like to be a cat."

With her bandmate, James Hanna, she does know about sculpting otherworldly sonic textures, as on their new album and fifth effort, "Fluorescence."

**Asobi Seksu is moving into film soundtracks. Do you write with visuals in mind?** I'm more of an aural person, I think, than a visual person. Although, of course, I'm a visual person, as well, by what I see and the images I come across. But I'm mostly sensitive to sound, and that's the foundation and starting point for me and my art. So I'm always surprised when an inspiration comes from elsewhere; that's a really weird moment for me.

**Like your new B-side, "Vicious Bears," perhaps?** I know exactly where that came from. Somebody had typed up our lyrics online for

a song off our album "Hush," and they thought that I was singing "tied with vicious bears." And I was like, "That is incredible that this person heard this because that's better than what we came up with!" It was such an arresting image, we couldn't just let it die.

**You're always getting songs placed in great TV series. What's the latest?** It's gotten to be such a competitive world because that's becoming a band's bread and butter. And it's a bit jarring to say, "OK, I make music and I put it out there in the world, but that's not how I'll be compensated anymore." It's an awkward transition for a lot of us. And there's just no guarantee that you'll get that license or placement because so much of it is like, "Oh yes, you have it," and then, "Oh, sorry, we decided to scrap that whole project." Or, "The client doesn't want to make this commercial anymore." In the advertising world, nothing is final. So banking on that to sustain your career is just madness. But as long as I can find a way to do my music and enjoy it, that's really all I want to focus on.

**Because Sammy is depending on you for his Meow Mix, right? Well, no. He's too good for Meow Mix! That's why I have to work even harder!**

— Tom Lanham



COURTESY PHOTO

**IF YOU GO**  
Asobi Seksu

**Where:** Bottom of the Hill, 1233 17th St., San Francisco  
**When:** 2 p.m. Monday  
**Tickets:** \$12  
**Contact:** (415) 621-4455, www.bottomofthehill.com

**Note:** Also, the band opens for Neon Indian at 9 p.m. Sunday at the New Parish, 579 18th St., Oakland

**Making music:** Yuki Chikudate and James Hanna comprise Asobi Seksu, which plays two local shows next week.

## THE LIST

**Top pick**  
Bill Kwan

**7 p.m. Monday. \$20.** By day, he's a dermatologist with a busy Union Square-area practice. But at night, he's a cool jazz singer performing from his new CD "Pentimento."

The easy-listening album features new and old standards showcasing the influences Mel Torme, Ella Fitzgerald, Antonio Carlos Jobim and Joao and Astrud Gilberto had on Kwan's music. [Rrazz Room, Hotel Nikko, 222 Mason St., S.F., (415) 394-1189, www.therrazzroom.com]

## Friday

**Goapele**

**8 and 10 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 7 and 9 p.m. Sunday. \$28.** With her smooth and soulful vocals, the Oakland-based R&B songstress has been described by Rolling Stone magazine as the "spiritual love child of Sade and D'Angelo." [Yoshi's, 1330 Fillmore St., S.F., (415) 655-5600, www.yoshis.com]

## Saturday

**Guitar Wolf**

**9:30 p.m. \$15.** The garage-rock trio from Japan delivers a high-intensity live performance in which clothing is largely optional, but the pompadours are requisite. [Bottom of the Hill, 1233 17th St., S.F., (415) 621-4455, www.bottomofthehill.com]

## Sunday

**Johnny Nitro Celebration**

**8 p.m. \$15.** The concert pays tribute to powerhouse blues performer Johnny Nitro — known for the catch phrase, "Keep the bacon shakin'!" — who died in February after playing The Saloon in North Beach for decades. The bill includes Daniel Castro, Alvon, Chris Cobb, Johnny Ace and Blues Power, among others. [Slim's, 333 11th St., S.F., (415) 255-0333, www.slims-sf.com]

## Adventures with Super Furry Animals' Gruff Rhys

By Tom Lanham  
Special to The Examiner

Late travel writer Bruce Chatwin had been there before him, as described in the adventurous 1977 book "In Patagonia."

But that didn't stop Super Furry Animals frontman Gruff Rhys from making his own exploratory sojourn to Brazil and Argentina. From it, he and filmmaker Dylan Goch made a surreal documentary called "Separado!" and it's an art-house hit in Britain.

"We went to a lot of the places that Bruce Chatwin went to — like where Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid had their last stand — and we met a few people who remembered him, as well," says the star, who wore a Mighty Morphin Power Rangers helmet during filming.

Rhys won't be sporting the headgear when he hits Popszene next week, backing his chiming third solo album, "Hotel Shampoo," which was inspired by his habit of hoarding hotel amenities while on tour with the band.

**IF YOU GO**  
Gruff Rhys

**Where:** Popszene, Rickshaw Stop, 155 Fell St., San Francisco  
**When:** 9 p.m. June 2  
**Tickets:** \$13  
**Contact:** (415) 861-2011, www.rickshawstop.com, www.snagtickets.com



COURTESY PHOTO

**In town:** Welsh pop artist Gruff Rhys, whose latest album is "Hotel Shampoo," plays Popszene at the Rickshaw Stop next week.

He even created an art installation of the empty bottles for a hometown Cardiff gallery.

Rhys says he made "Separado!" because he was trying to cook up a scheme to go to Patagonia for years.

"I was obsessed with the place and with the Welsh-speaking communities over there," he says. "And five years ago, I started to play solo

shows, so for the first time I was really portable and I could just go anywhere and play."

The concept was rooted in curious history.

In 1880, a Rhys forebear named Dafydd Jones split from the rest of his clan and, like many impoverished Welsh at the time, relocated to Argentina, where free land was available.

"They became pawns in the colonization of South America," Rhys says. "They emigrated because of ideology, wanting to set up a free Wales, but the only space left in the Americas was this dust bowl. But they stuck together, became master irrigators and survived many hardships."

A century went by with no contact between families — until 1974, when a strange poncho-clad Argentinian musician named Rene Griffiths appeared on Cardiff TV, singing Welsh pop songs on horseback.

When Rhys discovered the man was his long-lost uncle, he had his MacGuffin. He set up a South American solo tour and went looking for Griffiths in the Andes.

Culture shock ensued.

Rhys had never seen armadillos before.

"So I'd run from them," he says, sheepishly. "And a penguin took a dislike to us and broke our camera on the first day of filming. But to go to the other side of the world and hear people speaking Welsh? That alone was a pretty insane experience."