

**Scissor Sisters – ‘Ta-Dah’**  
**Album Review and Interview by Alan Bennett Ilagan**

*As they attempt to take the world by storm for a second time with their new album **Ta-Dah**, the Scissor Sisters hope to prove they’re still sharp enough to shred it on the dance floor. Guitarist Del Marquis (he of the fancy pants) sheds some light on what it takes to be a Sister these days.*

In the two years since their first record, some may have wondered whether the **Scissor Sisters** had gotten rusty, lost their edge, or simply fell apart at the fulcrum. These days you’re no longer as good as your last record – it’s all about your next record. In the fractured state of the music industry, it’s an even more precarious spot. Coming off the heady high of their self-titled debut album, the Scissor Sisters now find themselves in the unenviable position of trying to avoid the dreaded sophomore album jinx.

Following a trailblazing debut album is the bane of many a band. Some choose to hide behind albums of covers or corny Christmas compilations. Others divert comparisons by going in a wildly different direction. If you play it safe and produce more of the same, it rings of staleness (no matter how good it was the first time around). At the same time, you don’t want to deviate so far from your sound that you’re unrecognizable. It’s tricky to maneuver through the treacherous waters of a follow-up album, trickier still to match and maintain such a stunning level of success.

Del Marquis, guitarist for the band, downplays that, but acknowledges the different spot they’re in. “The first album was just a modest success,” he contends, “But it fueled the fire to be better.”

Some of the pressure may be off in the United States, where they enjoyed some success (mostly in the elite circles of elevated taste and the truly trendsetting), but they failed to conquer the masses. Instead, they reveled in a slow-burn success, finding a gay fan base of those who wanted to shag Jake Shears and a contingent of strong women who found a savior in Ana Matronic. The rest just wanted to groove to a decent melody that wasn’t marred by a rap bridge.

Happily, ***Ta-Dah*** picks up where the quirky quintet last left off without skipping a beat, and the Sisters prove themselves as razor-sharp as ever. Lead-off single “I Don’t Feel Like Dancing” is easily one of the catchiest pop tunes in years, its luscious melody and impossible-to-sit-still-for piano-driven beat at lovely odds with its melancholy message. The accompanying video is a psychedelic trip – a colorful orgasm of sensory overload. If America doesn’t catch on, it’ll only make the Sisters that much cooler.

Sir Elton John joins the Sisters on “I Don’t Feel Like Dancin’” and “Intermission”, lending his unmistakable piano-pounding to the proceedings, while the band’s fondness for the Bee Gees finds further fruition in “Lights”. The runaway dance race track of this album comes on the implausibly titled “Paul McCartney”, who apparently appeared to Shears in a dream. Regardless of the inspiration, it’s pure dance magic – a gorgeous, crazy, free-for-all, where all that matters is the music and an unrelenting beat. It’s this spirit that trumps any sort of sophomore slump, real or imagined.

“Here I was awaiting/ Praying for the muse/ I’m finally awake and you have left me less confused/ Maybe now you will hear me now/ I’m just in love, in love with your sound.” The sound is fortuitously glorious, and they easily retain their crown as the World’s Most Fun Band.

True to their phantasmagoric patchwork style, their influences range from Sir John and Sir Paul McCartney, to a spoken bit of dialogue from Judy Garland, along with Madonna's resurrection-mastermind, Stuart Price on Ana Matronic's chic vocal track "Kiss You Off". Despite this, however, their oddest "collaborator" may be the city of New Orleans, which plays a part in a number of cuts.

"Cities come and cities go just like the old empires," Mr. Shears sighs on "I Don't Feel Like Dancin'", while "She's My Man" is all about the Big Easy. "This town was built on muddy stilts by the lunatic parade/ It rains like Revelations/ Gonna wash these freaks away," indeed.

"The song "She's My Man" refers to the city and the folklore of the city. That's Jake's bag," Del claims. "He's the lyricist. There's nothing like it in the world. Such a bastard combination of European sensibility and influences of Africa. It's something that was definitely an inspiration to Jake."

It's actually a rather fitting connection – both New Orleans and the Scissor Sisters have been through their respective hurricanes, a little more rough and ragged for wear, but stronger and more determined than ever. The city has always been haunted by an underlying melancholy, while possessing fertile creative ground and a decadence bordering on depravity, much like the Sisters themselves.

*Ta-Dah* is a deeper, more reflective album than their debut, and there's no way it could be anything else. Cuts like "The Other Side" and "Might Tell You Tonight" reveal the substance beneath the superficial glitter; these Scissors may sparkle and shine, but they're sharp and incisive too.

As far as any tension in the band goes, they've managed to work out any kinks quite successfully. While each member is an unforgettable individual in their own right, when the lights come up they function cohesively as one. Del attributes this to a little bit of research.

"What I find healthy is reading other band bios and seeing how they dealt with things," he says. "It's in the nature of the artist to have a lot of conflict. There's lots of ego involved so it's important to find that balance." Going further he admits, "There are some big egos, but we've learned to relate constructively without a therapist! I'm in a relationship with these people."

Recognizing the separate identities of the artist versus the person, Del finds that to be an integral component of the delicate balancing act.

"I feel like I have that advantage of getting suited up on stage," he explains. "I feel like I'm in my superman outfit and when I go home I relate to everything as me." That separation is key to being in a band like the Scissor Sisters. "I'm comfortable with just going home and being with my boyfriend," Del concludes. "If you just rely on the fame part of it everything can get sick. I don't rely on the people screaming at me to bring me happiness, I rely on real life for that."

As the album closes, they ask, "What is it that you want? What is it that you give? Where do you plan on finding it? How do you want to live?" In the end, they give it up to love – the driving force that's been behind rock and roll since its fiery inception: "Love is what I want/ Love is what I give/ Right here's where I'm finding it/ That's how I'm gonna live." After the whirlwind rollercoaster of the last two years, it's good to see that these Scissors still know how to cut a rug.