

# PHANTOGRAM

## VOICES

(Republic)

Can a band working in relative isolation craft music that resonates with listeners around the world? Can that band and its music evolve and connect with an ever-widening audience without sacrificing quality or compromising integrity?

When the band in question is Phantogram, the answer to both is unequivocally "yes." And *Voices* provides indisputable proof. The New York duo's second full-length album catches the ear quickly, melding hazy dream pop, dark atmospheres, and head-knocking rhythms into a compelling, original sound.

Since 2007, Phantogram's music has evolved organically, and the band's career has mirrored that development. Formed in Saratoga Springs, a small city in upstate New York, longtime friends Josh Carter and Sarah Barthel crafted music untroubled by outside interference. With each new release and tour since 2009 debut *Eyelid Movies* (Barsuk), their sound has progressed—and so has their popularity. Yet *Voices* makes no concessions to commercialism. From inception to execution, Phantogram's second album stays true to the aesthetic that has won them a wide, disparate fan base.

The making of *Voices* hewed closer to its predecessors than the band first intended. "We tried writing in Los Angeles, we tried writing in New York City, but we had to head back to upstate New York to get some peace and quiet," says Barthel. Only after the initial songwriting was completed did they decamp to LA, where Carter would team up with co-producer John Hill (M.I.A., Santigold) to record and put the finishing touches on the band's sophomore album.

Although hip-hop is a key influence on their music, the division of labor in Phantogram doesn't neatly split into clear cut old school roles of DJ and MC. The two members share creative responsibilities. Carter sings lead on two new tunes and Barthel assumed a bigger role in production on *Voices*. "If we're stumped on something, we're able to swap the material," she adds. "That's a really cool process, because one of us will think of an idea the other might not have."

Phantogram has toured incessantly since the release of *Eyelid Movies*, and the live experience played an undeniable role in the creation of the new record. "Touring helped us expand and discover new sounds and dynamics that we wanted to incorporate in *Voices*" says Barthel.

In addition to the new sonic discoveries, all those shows have proved integral to the band's gradual, but steady, rise in acclaim. "A huge part of our audience comes from touring," says Carter. "Being able to go from playing a crowd of five people to 50, then 500 or even 5,000 has marked our progress and shown us the value of working hard, while challenging us to still make our music unique."

Discipline and innovation have won Phantogram admiration from well-seasoned peers and the industry. Acclaimed music supervisor Alexandra Patsavas (*The Twilight Saga*) solicited an exclusive track ("Lights") for the soundtrack of *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*. The duo joined forces with the Flaming Lips for "You Lust," showcased on the 2013 album *The Terror*.

Meanwhile, working with Big Boi on three tracks for his 2012 solo album *Vicious Lies and Dangerous Rumors* did more than just broaden Phantogram's listening audience. The Outkast veteran also dispensed sage advice as they graduated to a larger record label and bigger crowds. "The conversations with him gave us composure and confidence," says Barthel. "He told us not to worry and to stay true to what we were already doing." Lend an ear to *Voices* and it is clear Phantogram took that advice to heart.