



# Swede emotion

## Little Dragon make lovely electro-pop to escape their small town blues

By Sammi Skolmoski



Kids don't discover new music these days; they're force-fed piles of it from the crappy TV they watch. Most of the music on this crappy TV is crappy. Go figure. But sometimes a show will get it right and bring an otherwise unreachable band the exposure it deserves. Think Imogen Heap on The OC, or even the recent too-good-to-believe New Moon soundtrack.

Such is the case for Little Dragon. Upon first listen, their song "Twice" might not seem an apt fit for a sexually charged hospital drama, but someone found it a suitable complement to Patrick Dempsey's feathered froff, and thus it was featured on an episode of Grey's Anatomy.

The band, which has slowly grown from scattered experimenters to focused indie-rock darlings, never had aspirations to stardom, let alone one day contributing to prime-time melodrama.

"We never really [gave] a second thought to if it was something that we would do or not do," says frontwoman Yukimi Nagano. "It was just something that we did—surviving with something that you know you have to do."

Since then, Little Dragon has garnered attention from more appropriate audiences, like the folks at L.A.'s taste-making radio station, KCRW. There they received the second most plays of any artist last year (after Radiohead) and went on tour with TV on the Radio, all without a U.S. record label.

Little Dragon hail from Gothenburg, Sweden, a city whose greatest attraction is a wooden-tracked rollercoaster dubbed Best in the World in 2003 and 2005. Aside from one year in Japan, one in Anaheim, Calif., and summers in the States, Nagano was confined to the tedium of small-town life in Sweden. She and three friends—Erik Bodin (drums), Fredrik Källgren Wallin (bass) and Håkan Wirenstrand (keyboards)—formed a band in high school, if only to temporarily fend off boredom.

"We didn't think of ourselves as a band that way because we would just be playing music and hanging out," Nagano says.

The band soon became an antidote to the overabundance of bad music that seemed to plague Gothenburg.

"Some people blame it on the weather, I don't know," Nagano says. "Just living in a small town, you kind of have to stimulate yourself. It's a pretty quiet town, so that makes me pretty restless and productive."

Little Dragon's recently released sophomore album Machine Dreams, is even better than their self-titled 2007 debut. The band refuses to be loyal to just one time period or genre. The music is just retro enough to know exactly what Nagano spent her formative years listening to (Prince) but experimental enough to propel it forward into areas not yet charted by an electro group. Her voice adds the anchor of classic soul to the otherwise spacey ambiance of laser noises and the like.

"When you are listening to that [kind of music] really intensely, you sing along. In my teens, I started listening to a lot of Prince and Depeche Mode. It really influenced me and definitely molded me," she says.

It's clear that once the band left Gothenburg on their first tour, they became more focused. Nagano saw how people at their live shows responded strongly to their upbeat songs, so they brought that knowledge back to the studio when they recorded Machine Dreams.

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"We played a lot after we released the first album and realized we wanted to make more up-tempo songs that people could dance to," she says.

Nagano advises listeners to "have an open mind and dancing shoes on" for the band's live shows. Overall, she hopes the Little Dragon experience provides the same escape for the audience that it's always been for the band.

"It could be something really positive for the world," she says sincerely, quickly adding, "It's cliché—don't hate me."

*Little Dragon play with Pollyn and DJ Blacq Shampoo on Thursday, Dec. 3, at The Casbah.*  
[www.myspace.com/yourlittledragon](http://www.myspace.com/yourlittledragon).

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