

IQU *SUN Q* BIO

In the unique world of IQU, nothing is certain and everything is permissible; that's the feeling you get upon first entrance into their special sonic universe. Stylistically diverse and tremendously resourceful, IQU is an electronic act on the rise, for their sound is absolutely original, without peer, and continues to perk up the ears of many worldwide.

IQU was born as icu (changed after threat of legal action after a '98 CMJ performance where they were approached by a hardcore band of a similar name). The brainchild of Kento Oiwa, aka KO, IQU evolved as a creative partnership that he and Michiko Swiggs developed in a rain-soaked and artistically fertile ground of Olympia, Washington circa 1997.

KO spent his childhood in Japan, where he found himself listening to prog rock, the Creation records oeuvre and jazz, as well as a healthy dose of J-pop...he later moved to Florida, then onto Olympia where he attended Evergreen State College studying ethno-musicology with emphasis in Balinese music/Gaemelan.

Fast forward to 1997....after six years of mixing bands at the infamous Capitol Theatre Backstage in the hey day of Olympia's then burgeoning rock scene, KO's idea of IQU was born as he manned the boards for countless bands and DJ's. His basic idea was to manipulate all kinds of sounds and the experiment began. The early template for IQU would mix up live guitar, horns, Casio keyboards and whatever else he found in thrift stores and place them over looped and programmed beats.

Michiko Swiggs, a child of British New Zealand and Japanese descent, spent her youth living in various port cities around the Pacific Ocean, before settling in Washington state. She moved to Olympia to attend the Evergreen State College, pursuing a degree in experimental animation and electronic music.

By luck, Michiko moved into a house right across the street from KO. The two met and bonded over everything from eclectic music to independent films. In their first creative endeavor, Michiko asked KO to score a soundtrack for an animated film she was producing. Soon after, they decided to take a trip to Japan. It wasn't until attending a noise rave in Osaka that the duo decided to start making music together. With her splendid array of vintage keyboards and analog synthesizers, it seemed they had each met their match. They were the perfect element for the futuristic electronic pop music K.O. was constructing.

Shying away from the main genre of the city's music scene, they took to experimenting with as many styles and sounds as possible. The music took form in fuzzy drum and bass textures, child like choir sounds, fucked up beat matching and scratching married with live elements such as noise guitar, theremin and synth-bass.

The word spread fast on their live show and they soon caught the ear of K Records' Calvin Johnson, who quickly signed the band to his label in '98 after their debut release, the 7" single "*Despite The Smell of Colors Vol. i*". It started the rumor outside of Olympia about an electronic band which had a pleasing sound to both the techno crowd and the indie rock stable. Live show frequency increased, attracting more and more people. IQU went on a national tour with Unwound, spreading the word even further.

The next release, *Chotto Matte a Moment*, caught on quick. It was an album that resonated with critics across the country. It also set the stage for a constant touring schedule: They were invited to play the first Coachella Festival, handpicked by The Flaming Lips (for their Music Against Brain Degeneration tour), as well as touring with acts like Looper, Hovercraft, Mouse on Mars, Add N to X, Dub Narcotic Sound System and sharing the stage with acts like Cornelius, Built to Spill, Fugazi, Modest Mouse, Sleater-Kinney...the IQU sound appealed to backpack hip hop heads and white belt wearing hipsters alike.

As with all bands, the road taught them a great deal. One has likened IQU's live performance to being that of two mad scientists concocting a dance rock symphony, taking found sounds and infusing them with rock's unpredictable sensibility.

True to IQU's spirit, they return with *Sun Q* (Sonic Boom Recordings). With the playful side of electronic music still intact, from K.O.'s virtuosic and operatic theremin playing to Swiggs' talkbox vocals, they solidify *Sun Q* with a pop sensibility showcasing beautiful melodies and a strong DIY aesthetic. It's the disco of Moroder, the vocoder funk of Zapp, the eighties breakbeat experiments of Renegade Soundwave and the ambience of Eno. It's a mish mash of sounds and styles that is more radio friendly. It's what you'd expect from IQU and their sophomore release- mining the past for new sounds while creating a sound that's all their own. It's a fresh and engaging experience with each listen.

For more information contact 2:30 Publicity: Frank Nieto 206.323.INDY(4639) * Frank@230publicity.com

