

CAT SCRATCH FEVER: MORGAN LANDER OF KITTIE

IF THE MERE FACT THAT SISTERS MORGAN AND MERCEDES LANDER OF THE Canadian metal trio Kittie are still in their teens fails to impress you, consider this: the band has already released two hit albums on Artemis Records, supported Slipknot and Pantera on tour, and co-headlined both the Sno Core tour and the Ozzfest 2000 sidestage.

We spoke to guitarist/vocalist Morgan Lander a few days before the release of Kittie's latest EP, *Safe*, which features new bassist Jennifer J. Arroyo, with Mercedes pounding drums as usual. Like the group's two albums, *Spit* and *Oracle*, the new disc displays classic guitar rock and vintage metal influences, leavened by occasional atmospheric touches.

Were you guys always drawn to heavy music?

"For Mercedes and me, late '60s, '70s, and early-'80s guitar rock were definitely the predominant taste-shapers. Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Ted Nugent, AC/DC and Van Halen really helped show us the way! Meanwhile, Jennifer grew up in the New York hardcore scene, where she saw some of her first shows when she was all of 12 or 13. Biohazard is still one of her favorite bands."

Who are some of the musicians who inspire you today?

"For the most part I'm not really into guitar god worship, but I do admire players who develop their own style — people like Zakk Wylde, Kerry King and Jeff Hanneman from Slayer, Jerry Cantrell, and Ted Nugent are all amazing and unique in their own ways, and I admire that."

Did you and Mercedes always know you'd play together?

"Yes. Even at a very early age we would make up songs together, record them on tape, and give ourselves some hilarious band names."

What are the benefits of being both family and band-mates? And are there any disadvantages?

"I do believe there's a certain chemistry that siblings have. The fact that you tend to know what the other will do next can be a real advantage, but it can also make things crazy. Mercedes and I never really fight — by no means are we like Liam and Noel Gallagher of Oasis — but we all have our moments."

You've been using a Yamaha AW16G recorder on the road.

"Yes. We hook it up to the mixing board to get a good, clean, basic recording of the show. It's always helpful to get another perspective of the show, to see how certain things come across to the fans or to get an idea of how to improve or vary the set.

Plus, it's fun to listen to the show that night and be able to say with confidence, "Hell yeah, we rocked!" It's just reassuring, you know?"

What are your impressions of the AW16G?

"It is a great digital recorder with a loud, clear sound — definitely one of the better-sounding digital 16-tracks on the market. The layout is so simple that even novices can figure out the basics just by looking at it. It's compact enough to fit just about anywhere, totally light, and tough as nails, so it's a must-have for people who want to capture ideas or do demo work on the road."

Is there anything you don't like about it?

[Laughs.] "The demo song that comes with it may have to go, but other than that, it's an amazing little machine. It's an artist's best friend — next to their guitar of course."

"THE BEAUTY OF METAL IS THAT IT TRANSCENDS SO MANY SPECIFIC LABELS."

Morgan Lander

Is there such thing as a Canadian metal sound?

"I'm not sure if there is, because the beauty of metal is that it transcends so many specific labels. But I do believe that a lot of our development as a band had to do with a certain amount of musical isolation due to the lack of metal bands in our local scene in London, Ontario. That left us up to our own devices."

Have we progressed to the point where audiences are ready to accept an all-female heavy rock band? Or do you feel that there's a double standard, that you need to prove yourselves with every gig?

"I feel that no matter who you are, you must always prove yourself in your live show. New bands need to build their reputations, and that's the way we've always approached things. Every show deserves your best effort. There's always new ground to cover and new windows of opportunity to open. We have come in contact with a lot of people who found it hard to take us seriously, not so much because of our gender, but because of the age difference between a 40-year-old journalist and a 15-year-old girl. I feel that with time — and our new album, *Oracle* — we've been able to tap into the fans that enjoy the music for what it is, and not because of age or gender or sex appeal."

What do you imagine Kittie doing five years from now?

"More than anything, I'd love to be doing this. I'm sure we will have evolved a bit by then, but that's half the fun of being in a band."

Mercedes Lander