

Bella

BELLA

No One Will Know

Mint Records

Bella is a trio from Vancouver that does a neat little bit of mixing and matching on their first record for Mint, *No One Will Know*, and ends up with an instantly recognizable, completely enjoyable sound. They aren't the only band around who operate using some combination of squelchy old synths, new wave-inspired rhythms, New Order-y bass lines, angular indie rock guitars and indie-pop sweet vocals. There are quite a few in Sweden (Suburban Kids with Biblical Names, the Legends, Vapnet), a couple in Canada (Immaculate Machine, the Gay) and a handful in the US and elsewhere (Tilly & the Wall, the Rentals, Architecture in Helsinki) that come to mind but Bella do it so well that it feels like they're the first to ever try it. What makes them special is their perfect balance of melancholy and sweetness, of simplicity and unpredictability. The lyrics are the melancholy part dealing with snowy days, sleeping alone, that good old standby heartbreak, lousy apartments and rotten dreams. Never too mopey or personal, they pack a punch using a few key words and phrases. The voices are the sweetness, both drummer Tiffany Garrett Sotomayor and keyboardist Charla McCutcheon have angelic voices that blend in perfect harmony and soar shyly on their own. They also sing everything very straight with absolutely no excess technique, letting the melody and the words impart the emotion. The starkness of their voices and harmonies really hit hard on the album's slow ballads *Settle Down* and *No One Will Know*. Bassist/guitarist Cameron Fraser handles the vocals on a couple songs and though his voice is more impassioned, it fits well with the girls' harmonies and gives the band and album another dimension. The simplicity of the record's arrangements works well in the group's favor, again letting the melodies and vocals breathe. The unpredictability from song to song as to the components of each arrangement keeps things interesting since the band uses different synth sound, guitar tone or drumming style on just about every track. Of course, without songs to fill the excellent arrangements, they are just empty window dressing. No problem there, Bella has the songs. The best on the album (*Give It a Night*, *Camelot*, *Don't Sleep Alone* and *Didn't Mean to Break Our Love*) are as good as any pop, indie or otherwise, in 2007. Bella may not be re-inventing the wheel on *No One Will Know* but if you are a fan of indie pop, you simply have to have this record in your collection.

Tim Sendra

www.allmusic.com

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BELLA

No One Will Know

Mint Records

Splasy, happy alt-pop sunshine unravels knotty relationships as *No One* percolates with rat-tat-tat rhythms and spunky eighties synths, bouncing with transcendent energy and sly irony. The Vancouver trio trades vocals, instruments and harmonies with dazzling ease as *No One* plunges into feel-good nostalgia and new wave bubble-gum documenting love's fickleness and fun's triumph. www.myspace.com/bella

[www.maximumink.com](http://www.maximumink.com/articles.php?articleId=1184)
[/articles.php?articleId=1184](http://articles.php?articleId=1184)



Local Motion

A mature Bella blasts out of the bedroom

Local Motion By Shawn Conner

Publish Date: October 4, 2007

Bella fans certainly get their money's worth. Not only can they enjoy the giddy synth-pop on the band's new *No One Will Know*, but if they fly into town for a show there's a chance drummer Tiffany Garrett Sotomayor will pick them up at the airport. At least, that's the impression the Straight gets upon reaching Sotomayor the day before her band's gig at San Francisco's Bottom of the Hill club. She's en route to Sacramento, where she's picking up a couple of friends, one from Vancouver, the other from L.A. "Well, they're good friends for flying up here for the show," explains the Frisco-based Sotomayor, on her cell.

If infectious, easy-to-like girl-boy indie pop is your bag, the chance to hear *No One Will Know* cuts like "Don't Sleep Alone" and "Camelot" live is worth hopping a plane for. From the ringing electric guitar and cascading synths that open "Give It a Night" to the woozy riff and climactic harmonies of "Didn't Mean to Break Our Love", the disc overflows with sweet-tempered, vivacious melodies—at least on the surface.

"This album is a bit more melancholy compared to the first one [2005's *Pretty Mess*]," says the 25-year-old Sotomayor. "It's still upbeat, but the overall tone of the album is a bit darker, and we're a bit older. We knew what we were doing more. The first time we just recorded in the bedroom, and we just wanted to get music out there. With this one we had a plan and a direction in which we wanted to go."

In preparation for *No One Will Know*, the band cut some demos last year.

Sotomayor and the rest of Bella-guitarist Cameron Fraser and keyboardist Charla McCutcheon, both based in Vancouver—were happy with what they had recorded. Similarly enchanted, Vancouver's Mint Records signed Bella and sent the band into the studio to tweak the songs with the JC/DC production team of John Collins and David Carswell (Tegan and Sara, *New Pornographers*). The result recalls such synth-pop peers as Paper Moon and the Rentals as *No One Will Know* gleefully unleashes hook after hook. At times Bella sounds so joyously enamoured of melody that it's hard to match the music with the inner sleeve's picture of a severe-faced trio in matching space-age tunics.

"We always coordinate our outfits," Sotomayor says. "It just so happened we wanted to coordinate with white, and I bought those jackets for the three of us." The expressions, she says, were completely natural. "We have happy photos too."

The picture reveals the band members' arts background, which can be traced back to a college outside Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, where the three met. "It was such a small little music college, we were the odd people at school and attracted each other." Sotomayor is reluctant to name said institution, perhaps so old classmates can't track her down. "We really don't want that out there," she says. "It's top secret. People who know will know, and the rest-well, we can refer to the album title for that."

As much as (if not more than) art school, Imperial Teen served as an inspiration in Bella's early days. Roddy Bottum and Will Schwartz, two

members of the S.F.-based indie-pop unit popular in the second half of the '90s, play on *No One Will Know*. For Sotomayor, the connection goes back 15 years, to when she met Teen drummer Lynn Truell. "She was with someone in my family," she says. "I've grown up with her in my life. So she and the rest of the band have been my idols, I guess you can say."

At the time of our interview, Bella is scheduled to share the stage with a reunited (after a five-year hiatus) Imperial Teen at the Bottom of the Hill. For Sotomayor, it's a wish fulfilled. "That's my hang," she says of the San Francisco institution. "As small and sort of insignificant as the club may seem, it's the place I've wanted to play since I was 10. It's my Bowery Ballroom or Commodore—it's my place. So I'm really excited about that."

With luck, she might not even have to do the driving.

Bella plays a *No One Will Know* CD-release party at the Railway Club tonight (October 4).

www.straight.com

[/article-112623/a-mature-bella-blasts-out-of-the-bedroom](http://www.straight.com/article-112623/a-mature-bella-blasts-out-of-the-bedroom)



Bella

"No One Will Know" by Bella

by Zakariya Willis

EDGE Philadelphia Contributor

Tuesday Sep 18, 2007

If you want to know what the Raveonettes sound like if they added Cat Power in with their stark will to please folk on a solemn note, then stray no further from Canadian band, Bella. The soft synth-laden, cheery guitar conglomeration gives all the feeling of a business man who comes home, loosens his tie, and sits on the suede endowed couch and pours himself a vodka-tonic. The word "calm" applies heavily with their music, as does the word "crushing". I should have guessed, Imperial Teen had somewhat of an influence...and an assistance-Roddy Bottum (ex-Faith No More-er) was on hand with Will Schwartz to lend their pleasant twang in producing Bella's latest feat, No One Will Know, released on Mint Records, reformed but still the same lazy swing as their independently released debut, Pretty Mess, which is a bit hard to find these days, (Out-of-print) that is of course if you're looking to buy it at a corporate-laced online store.

It's cute, right up there with their siblings newly released "The Hair, the TV, the Baby & the Band"; it's whispery and complacent. Each song is similar, as the guitar riffs seem to never change, and squeezes that relaxed California wave out of its ass, but remarkably sounds different-if you can get some mileage out of each piece, then why the hell stop? It's interesting that the song titles seem to be aligned perfectly with each composition. "Don't Sleep Alone" damn near made me cry-Bella is not supposed to sound depressing, but it gives it off with a smile. Like the previously mentioned, each song is worn over with up-beat, bouncy riffs, and carefully present graceful vocals from Tiffany Garrett. Dreamy...dreamy is the best way to describe it. Now go into slumber.

www.edgephiladelphia.com

[/index.php?ci=51&ch=entertainment&sc=music&sc2=reviews&sc3=cd&id=7373](http://index.php?ci=51&ch=entertainment&sc=music&sc2=reviews&sc3=cd&id=7373)

Listen Up: Bella

"No One Will Know" (Mint)

Bella does a very good job at recapturing the winning, winsome sounds of the dreampop movement of a decade ago, evoking My Bloody Valentine and female-led shoegazers Lush (and on "Settle Down," Liz Phair's "Gunshy"). The Vancouver, B.C.-based trio, with help from members of Imperial Teen, punches up appealingly simple melodies with synthesizers, fuzzy guitars and, most important, the affect-free vocals of Tiffany Garrett Sotomayor and Charla McCutcheon. DOWNLOAD: "Didn't Mean to Break Our Love"

– Mikel Toombs

Bella and Imperial Teen perform at 10 p.m. Friday at the Crocodile Cafe, 2200 Second Ave.; 206-441-5611. \$12.

[seattlepi.nwsourc.com
/pop/332179_staycd20.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/pop/332179_staycd20.html)



Bella Overwork It

Tiffany Garrett Sotomayor sounds very small and far away. She's calling from a borrowed cellphone in northern California and, gripped with fatigue, she can't seem to remember how long she and her Vancouver band Bella have been in the U.S.

"Two weeks," she finally concludes after a short one-sided argument. "I think. My mind is just really scattered. The whole time we were in New York we slept a total of two hours in three days."

They also celebrated the release of their Mint Records debut, *No One Will Know*, in the city that never sleeps. The album is a sincere synth-pop blend swept with their characteristic girl-boy-girl vocals and liberally sprinkled with glittery harmonies.

The record marks the band's departure from the bedroom recordings of their debut full-length, *Pretty Mess*, and their progression into a more mature and produced sound.

"As people, we've grown," says Sotomayor. "As a band, we've grown."

"It's a natural progression. We knew what we were doing. The first album we recorded in Cameron's [Fraser, singer/guitarist/keyboardist] bedroom. It was lost little kids making music."

The new album was produced by Dave Carswell of JC/DC Studios (Tegan And Sara, The New Pornographers), which also lured the band further away from their DIY roots.

"Working with Dave was really great," Sotomayor recalls. "He just

seemed to get our sound. We really have a love of pop, like Justin Timberlake and Kylie Minogue, and he kind of got that."

Bella might not boast multi-million-dollar contracts like those pop icons, but they've progressed in their own right since they decided to congregate in Vancouver and pursue music six years ago. With their first release they garnered a small following and a reputation for putting on high-energy shows where they swapped instruments and encouraged dancing.

Along the way, Matt Hutchings amicably parted ways with the band, throwing the well-balanced boy-girl-boy-girl mix temporarily off axis. According to Sotomayor, it was for the best.

"The band had to change because we needed to make up for a missing link. That's the perfect way to describe how we wrote this album. It definitely played a role, but it was a great role. It's been for the better. It's good that he's gone and we wish him the best, but we've all moved on."

Looking to the future, the band hope to wander beyond North America to support the new release. European fans who've seen their show in Canada have convinced them that they'd be a hit overseas.

"Hopefully they're right," says Sotomayor. "I have friends there, and I think it's something we're going to be doing. I think their enthusiasm for music and having fun, and being a



genuine audience is really appealing to us, too."

But for now, she adds, they're looking forward to performing new songs for audiences at home.

"We're really excited to get back to Canada. That's really where we've worked ourselves."

It sounds as if catching up on those missed nights of sleep will have to wait.

www.chartattack.com/damn/2007/10/0302.cfm



Bella

Bella's pop goes down easy

By Allan Wigney

Four years ago, Bella's Tiffany Garrett Sotomayor notes, her band of synthesizer-loving purveyors of peppy pop tunes was anything but fashionable.

"We were kind of the first ones in Vancouver to be doing what we're doing," she says.

"It just wasn't the thing at the time to do shiny, poppy music. Now, we get comments about how we're not exactly reinventing the wheel.

"Well, I guess a lot of what we do isn't exactly new, but it's not something we think about when we're writing songs. It's not, 'Is this the best, freshest thing ever?' We make the music we make."

You'll find more than a dozen examples of that music on their second album, *No One Will Know*. And you will like what you hear. Which, after all, should be enough.

"We honestly don't try to emulate anything or anyone," Sotomayor stresses. "Trust me, when we try to copy somebody it ends up sounding absolutely horrible.

"There are bands we're into, and we've always loved bands that use those geeky, nerdy, glitchy sounds. But we're not trying to be New Order. As far as that goes (and the name has been raised in more than one review) I don't think we're stuck in the '80s at all. If anything, we're stuck in the early '90s."

Finding their own voice has been helped by such distinctive touches as the fact Sotomayor and bandmates Cameron Fraser and Charla McCutcheon rotate instruments on stage.

"I always think it's a treat," she says of changing up things midset. "Like a little piece of chocolate."

ottsun.canoe.ca
/Showbiz/Columnists/Wigney_Allan/2007/10/17/4582071.html

BELLA

No One Will Know Mint Records

In the world of new wave revivalism, most young bands tend to latch onto the hair styles, cyberpunk attire, and moody synthesizers, forgetting that above all of those distractions, the majority of the best bands of the '80s were pure pop bands. The Canadian trio, Bella, with their roughshod cover art, all white outfits and sneers, appeared to be headed in that well-trod direction, but the songs on their latest album eschews all of that surface noise to show that they are one of the few bands to capture the catchy sensibilities of the '80s with a surprising dash of subtlety. Sure, the Korgs and Moogs make their requisite appearances, but they are simply used to color the band's already well-outlined ideas. Towards the end of this CD, the group does indulge in a little Romeo Void and Blondie worship, but those songs do nothing to disavow the work that precedes it.

-- Bob Ham

[amplifiermagazine.com
/reviews/cds/bella_cd.php](http://amplifiermagazine.com/reviews/cds/bella_cd.php)



Bella

BELLA

No One Will Know

Mint Records

rating: 4 of 5 's

Catchy, electro-hooked pop is the order of the day for Bella's second release, "No One Will Know."

The twelve songs on the full-length are perfect little pop tunes. They balance keyboards and guitar work to create driving hooks that have a pleasurable staying power.

The album's real muscle is its super sweet synthesizer melodies. Indeed, the trio's use of keys creates a canvas on which to spill the other instruments. The result is fun, light music that comes with a smile and maybe a little bit of dancing. Tracks like, "Don't Sleep Alone," "No One Will Know" and "Didn't Mean to Break Our Love," simply demand volume and attention.

(To get a better idea of Bella's sound, imagine the Killers and Belly getting drunk together and having a baby... a baby that perfectly matches its angelic voice with clean guitars and layered keyboard musings.)

Overall, the songs are smart and well written, both lyrically and musically, and the electricity keeps them sounding fresh even after many listens.

"No One Will Know" is a great first-thing-in-the-morning-pick-me-up as well as a refreshing burst in the later part of the day. In fact, no matter when or where, Bella have what it takes to pull through the blase.

~ , Jean-Paul (posted October 2, 2007)

www.eyehartmusic.com

[/reviews/review.php?review=171](http://reviews/review.php?review=171)

BELLA

No One Will Know

Mint Records

Bella sure make sunny summer pop, especially considering that they come from such a rainy place as Vancouver, British Columbia. Don't let it scare you away if I say that this trio sounds a little like Bananarama, or do let it scare you away, if you're that timid. Clearly versed in the synth pop and longing of '80s bands like Human League, Bella will also win over fans of Tegan and Sara, or the New Pornographers and Death Cab for Cutie, though Bella's not as enigmatic or quite as infectious as any of them. Bella's music may be a little more self-serious than it needs to be. The slim lyrics don't necessarily benefit from prolonged consideration, but the synthy hooks, the sharp bursts of guitar and the subdued girl-girl vocals are the thing, and the band's fashionista connections and deconstructed cantilevered hairdos don't hurt either.

- John Adamian

www.hartfordadvocate.com/article.cfm?aid=3374



FEATURES: BELLA: DONT BELIEVE YOUR EARS

In some cases, a band's sound is not just the sum of its influences. Sometimes there are more outside stimuli at work when a band comes together and begins writing music and, if one needs an example to illustrate that fact, one need look no further than Bella—a band whose sound will lead listeners to different conclusions than the band initially expected.

For the uninitiated, the title of Bella's Mint Records debut, *No One Will Know* [released on September 18, 2007], is surprisingly accurate; no one will know exactly why they like it, but the band rams together a flawless combination of great elements from the 80s pop pantheon—Susanna Hoffs' vocals that sound like a hopeful but blushing pixie, Devo keyboards and the odd synthetic beat, Flock of Seagulls-esque Brit/synth-pop and 80s American indie-issued guitars—that sounds instantly recognizable even though you know you've never heard anything quite like it before and the reason, according to drummer Tiffany Garrett, is because what you're hear-

ing bears no debt to the 80s at all. "It's funny because we've been asked if the stuff from the 80s was an influence a lot, which is totally fine—I guess people associate synth sounds with the 80s—but for us, it's not where it comes from at all," explains Garrett bluntly from her home in Vancouver. "We're actually kind of stuck in the 90s with the bands that we all love and we're not really influenced by the 1980s bands in any particular way. Imperial Teen is definitely a big influence of mine—they started in the mid-90s—and as far as the others go, Cameron's really into Weezer and Radiohead's *Joy Electric Starfire 59* are really big bands for him too. Actually *Joy Electric* would be where a lot of the synth comes in I think. They're a newer band, but we think he's a genius.

"The only similarity that I can really recognize between us and the music from the 80s is that we do have a love for analog synths," continues the drummer. "That's basically what it comes down to; we're just nerds in

that aspect and when we're able to get our hands on a new synth it gets added to the collection; we've got a big room full of them.

"I guess it sort of feels like people want to peg us a lot but I think after you talk to us, your perception of what we do changes because it's very easy to make assumptions and guess our influences but it's usually inaccurate."

Formed just four years ago in Vancouver, Bella began working at an accelerated pace virtually upon meeting. The trio, comprised of singer/keyboardist/guitarist Charla McCutcheon, singer/guitarist Cameron Fraser and drummer/singer Garrett began writing almost immediately and in no time at all recorded and released *Pretty Mess* on their own and began playing in any venue that would have them. In short order, Mint Records took notice of the band when they opened for *The Organ* at a hometown show and the band struck up a friendship with their future label; words and pleasantries were traded back and forth regularly and, when Bella felt it was ready to record another album, they asked Mint if they'd be interested in releasing it. "They kept on asking us for updates after a couple of people from Mint caught us opening for *The Organ*," says Garrett as she unfolds Bella's Cinderella story. "I guess you could call it a courtship for about a year—a really long time of just back and forth and them keeping an eye on us and we just kept doing our thing—and finally we told him we wanted to put out another record and asked them if they were interested and they said yes.

"Mint has been really supportive and down-to-earth, which is great to work with," continues the drummer. "It's a totally different experience from releasing something independently.



People seem to be more accepting of it that way, but having a label backing you, it seems very different; people seem more critical. It feels like they're judging more intensely; a lot of it has been good, but it's a very different experience for us.

"The thing is too that the next record might end up being totally different from No One Will Know. On this record Charla is leading a lot of the vocals, but the next record could be based more around Cameron. That Charla took the lead just happened to be the way that the songwriting went this time. Particularly with this one, we wanted to put a common thread because with the first album that we did, it was really diverse with a lot of different song structures and styles and we didn't totally know what we were doing—we just put these songs together collectively and threw it out there. We had no intentions of anything really, we just wanted to get these songs that we had recorded and put them out to see what would happen. This time though, I think we focused more on creating a common thread and maybe making it's more acceptable in our minds because we thought it was possible to have too much diversity and we didn't want to run the risk of confusing people as to what we were or what our sound was. The next record though, we've already talked about featuring Cameron more and making more of an effort to split it in half. That has always been a prominent feature of our band; all three of us write and all three of us have the potential to lead a song."

When Echo spoke with Garrett, plans had already been set for the band to head out on the road—first to New York for a couple of shows to introduce Bella to the American market before heading home to Vancouver to begin a West-to-East Canadian tour. For many audiences, it will be their first exposure to Bella as a live act as the band has stuck mostly to larger mar-

kets like Toronto but, this time, it will be a much more thorough going over of the country before the coming winter when the band understandably plans to steer clear of the Trans-Canada highway. "We would like to work the East coast of the U.S. and definitely go to the U.K. as soon as possible as well, but as of right now, beyond Montreal, we aren't booked," explains Garrett of Bella's immediate hopes and plans. "We'd like to take it easy as far as Canada is concerned in the winter because trying to tour in the winter here is a bit of a nightmare. We've had some near-death experiences previously so we'd like to avoid that.

"We got as far as Saskatchewan and turned back after that last time," explains the drummer of Bella's hesitation to tour Canada in the winter again. "We actually were travelling in a truck because we didn't have a van so we had this big, king-cab truck. And it was a California truck so everything that could possibly have fallen apart did and we had to remove the dashboard to tape together some wires and get this special spray to lubricate it so it would spark and keep power going to the tail lights, otherwise we had no tail lights. This was in a blizzard too—we couldn't see two feet in front of us. Needless to say, we'd like to avoid doing that again if possible. We'd like to focus more on the States and the U.K. through the winter if we can."

For more on Bella, including winterless tour dates and more music, click here: myspace.com/bella
No One Will Know is out now on Mint Records.

Download - "Give it a Night" from No One Will Know - [mp3]

www.groundcontrolmag.com/type/1/

BELLA

No One Will Know

Mint Records

Rating: NNN

Bella are two girls and a boy from Vancouver who share lead vocal duties on their debut album. Their sound is a combination of shoegazer dream pop and synth-driven electro pop, both pretty evenly represented on every song. The jangly guitars and breathy vocals are balanced by handclaps and big, buzzing synth riffs, evening out the excesses of both genres.

It's a strong debut, but they've got their formula down a little too firmly. It would benefit from a wider palette of influences, or at least more variety in mood.

[www.nowtoronto.com](http://www.nowtoronto.com/issues/2007-09-13/music_discs2.php)
[/issues/2007-09-13/music_discs2.php](http://www.nowtoronto.com/issues/2007-09-13/music_discs2.php)



Bella

This Week's Feature: BELLA

Bella, No One Will Know (Mint)

WHO

Keybooard-heavy pop trio from Vancouver.

DISCOGRAPHY

Pretty Mess (Self-released, 2005)

The Split (with Columbus) (Pop Echo, 2006)

No One Will Know (Mint, 2007)

IN A NUTSHELL

No One Will Know sounds like what would happen if Metric stopped posing and got back to making good, interesting music.

THE STORY

I'd originally intended to talk about Bella in terms of what they're not -- namely, they're not Metric, and as far as I'm concerned, that's a good thing. And a quick, cursory listen of No One Will Know would support that thesis, too: songs like "Give It A Night" and "Stay Here" could easily match up with the best moments of Old World Underground, Where Are You Now?, while songs like the title track and "Unless You're Golden" aren't too far off, either. They're the

same kind of female-fronted, keyboard-heavy dance-pop that made Emily Haines & co. so much fun in the first place, and they attack those songs with enough energy that they make it sound as fresh as that kind of music can sound.

The more I listened to No One Will Know, however, the more I realized my initial assessment was completely off. In part, this was just a matter of superficial differences, like the fact the trio also features a guy singing on a few tracks, and that one of those tracks, "Ocean or a Lakeshore", is centred more around an acoustic guitar riff than around a keyboard. They're little things, but they're different enough that you start thinking about how else the band differs.

Looking deeper, in turn, reveals that No One Will Know is sadder and gloomier than anything Metric has done. Whereas the Toronto band has always, for me, been defined by the lyric "I'm sick, you're tired, let's dance", Bella seem to cover up melancholy with bright, shiny music - just listen to "Didn't Mean To Break

Our Love", and you'll hear the disconnect between the sunny music and breezy vocals and lyrics like "Stay away from me tonight". It's not as if it's a huge revelation for a band to combine the two, but that doesn't lessen its impact any when a band does it well -- and, as No One Will Know shows, Bella do it extremely well.

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/serendipity/><http://www.iheartmusic.net/serendipity/>



Bella

FIGHTING THE SYNTH-POP FIGHT

What is it with Vancouver and the 1980s? It seems bands there have never gotten over a fixation with bubble-gum pop played on cheap Casio keyboards. Of course, the city was home to one of the most important labels of that era, Nettwerk Records, but a slew of acts since then, including Paper Moon, and (recently disbanded) The Organ, somehow kept reminding us of the decade we'd generally like to forget.

The latest of these bands is Bella, a trio whose first album for Mint Records, *No One Will Know*, has just been released and is bringing them eastward for their first club tour as headliners. The sound is indeed a synthetic blast from the past, with songs like *Don't Sleep Alone*, and *Give It A Night* sure to give some listeners of a certain age flashbacks of awkward Grade 8 dances.

Is it just the way Vancouverites prefer to party? Surprisingly, Bella vocalist/drummer Tiffany Garrett Sotomayer recently told Vancouver weekly *The Georgia Straight* that *No One Will Know* is actually more melancholy than the band's 2005 indie debut, *Pretty Mess*. "It's still upbeat, but the overall tone of the album is a bit darker, and we're a bit older. We knew what we were doing more. The first time we just recorded in the bedroom, and we just wanted to get music out there. With this one we had a plan and a direction in which we wanted to go."

That musical vision was completed with the help of Vancouver's pre-eminent production team of John Collins and Dave Carswell, best known for their work with the New Pornographers and Tegan & Sara, who went to great lengths to erase any traces of irony from Bella's admittedly retrograde approach.

It can all be traced back six years ago to when the trio, which also includes guitarist/vocalist Cameron Fraser and keyboardist/vocalist Charla McCutcheon, found themselves in college in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, about which, for whatever reason, the band members are reluctant to divulge any more details.

"It was such a small little music college, we were the odd people at school and attracted each other," Sotomayer says. "We really don't want that (information) out there. It's top secret. People who know will know, and the rest, well, we can refer to the album title for that."

On the other hand, acceptance within the Vancouver pop scene came much more quickly. Bella's high-energy performances, which featured frequent instrument swapping, also brought attention south of the border, where they became close allies with San Francisco's Imperial Teen, the pop outfit started by former Faith No More keyboardist Roddy Bottum. Both he and fellow band member

Will Schwartz make cameos on *No One Will Know*, and the album's release was marked by Bella getting to open some rare Imperial Teen shows on the band's home turf.

But if Bella's sound proves anything, it's that every generation has the right, if not the obligation, to pick over the detritus of the previous one. Vancouver has always been this country's leader when it comes to recycling, and perhaps as a result we still might one day discover that the '80s weren't that bad after all.

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Bella

BELLA NO ONE WILL KNOW

★★★★★ indie



Bella is proof positive why music can be one of the most perfect forms of therapy. Just as the opening track guarantees, give this album a night and it will surely help work out all of your problems.

No One Will Know is a couple having a hard time mending all of the rough edges, the socially awkward girl who feels alone in the world, and the boy who wants to get away from it all. But most importantly it's the soothing melody that lets you know that you aren't the only one. Not only does this album literally cast out any forlorn feeling that you might be experiencing while you listen to it, but it gives you enough motivation to get out there and encounter it head on. It's the perfect album to go with a cup of chamomile tea and a long needed conversation.

All three musicians also come off as inspiring muses. Tiffany Garrett Sotomayor and Charla McCutcheon both have the harmonious voices of sirens, but even Cameron Fraser has a voice of gold. All of the instrumentation is finely polished and never misses a beat, yet at the same time it never gets in the way of the overall message the songs are trying to convey. If this album is any indication, then Bella are on their way towards paving a new way for indie music. **Bill Meagher**

The Magazine

