

radar: beach house

take me to the

WHEN DISCUSSING BEACH House, people invariably employ adjectives like *dreamy*, *melancholic*, and *languid*. This does not please Victoria Legrand and Alex Scally, the Baltimoreans who together record as Beach House and are releasing their third album, *Teen Dream*, in late January. "We're filthy, violent, neurotic people," Scally insists. "We're not 'dreamy' people." Legrand picks up where Scally leaves off (as she often does with him, and he often does with her): "When people meet us, they expect me to be in a dress that's blowing in the wind and for him to have a scarf. And we're like, 'Sorry!'"

And it's true that no one who meets them before hearing their music would make the mistake of pegging Beach House as a couple of zoned-out musicians. Their style oozes sex appeal; Legrand, for instance, wears ghetto-fabulous, gold YSL-knockoff hoops. While they don't appear particularly filthy, violent, or neurotic, they do give off an air of badass nonchalance.

Their demeanor notwithstanding, the duo is damn serious about their work. They report for interview duty right on time at a dark, boudoir-ish Williamsburg bar, just after a two-hour drive from Poughkeepsie. This is the final stretch of their 10-day, 5,600-mile tour with Grizzly Bear—to whom Legrand sometimes lends her voice—yet there are still miles to go before they can sleep in their own (separate) beds back in Maryland. When presented with the question of whether or not to have a Saturday-afternoon drink, there is much hemming and hawing,

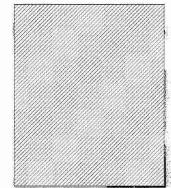
weighing of pros and cons. Scally advises Legrand against it. "Remember, you've got Conan this week," he says, referring to her impending *Tonight Show* performance with Grizzly Bear. "You've gotta preserve your voice." Legrand shoots him a half-grin, half-scowl that says, "You're not the boss of me." She forgoes the drink anyway.

Beach House's members do seem in agreement on one thing—fighting the perception that they are purveyors of sleepytime songs. *Teen Dream*'s music is equally harmonious: Legrand's voice dances in lockstep with Scally's guitar, and her own keyboards gracefully weave throughout. The songs start small and eventually build to euphoric, sometimes noisy crescendos. Yes, despite protestations, atmospherics still pervade the duo's album, but their compositions are underscored by a polite restlessness and bouncy, almost-bluesy percussive sounds.

Perhaps that's owing to the near-sleepless month the two spent recording *Teen Dream* in a Woodstock, New York, church turned studio called—probably to their chagrin—Dreamland. The finished product shows both the influence of Beach House's woody surroundings and their insomniac workaholicism. (The gently thumping, propulsive "So Long," for example, evokes an adolescent night spent on the hood of your dad's car, gazing up in wonder at a meteor shower.)

This might not be bedtime music in the lullaby sense, but *Teen Dream* will certainly aid a different kind of nighttime activity. *Teen Dream*'s driving rhythms and smooth-as-silk, deep-throated vocals are musical foreplay—an attribute that the band says is completely by design. "We think this record is a major sex record," Scally says with a wide smile, eliciting a high-five from Legrand. "Maybe this could reactivate the sex lives of people in their thirties who've gotten into the once-a-week thing."

It's unlikely that such playful musicians could ever actually be dark or violent, and maybe using the word *dream* in the album title will work against Legrand and Scally's desire to shed the dream-pop label. But the record sends a loud-and-clear message: Beach House has never been more awake.



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beach house attempts to shrug off their dream-pop label by making songs that'll put you in the mood. by courtney reimer.
photographed by elizabeth weinberg

