

Ohbijou live & in conversation in New York

The audience capacity at The Rock Shop in Brooklyn, New York is 120 patrons. The audience capacity at Trinity-St. Pauls United Church in Toronto, Canada, where **Ohbijou** played a sold-out show for the release of their third full length album 'Metal Meets', is 770.

Toronto-based Ohbijou have made quite a name for themselves in Canada. Regarded as the darlings of indie folk, if you will, the bands previous album 'Beacons' (2009) quickly became a CBC Radio 3 favourite. Playing festivals and making radio appearances, almost all of Ohbijous shows in Toronto are sold-out fanfares that guarantee an amazing time with good friends and even better music. But outside of Canada, its a different scene.

Playing in different countries is a little different, said **Heather Kirby**, the bands bassist in an interview before the show. Its a lot different actually. The States is a huge market so breaking into it is tough.

Ohbijou played to a receptive audience at The Rock Shop on November 4th, despite most of the crowd not being familiar with the band. **Casey Mecija**, Ohbijous lead vocalist and guitarist (as well as birthday girl of the night) says audiences are built upon touring exposure. We try to keep really level headed about it, Casey said regarding the variation of audience and venue sizes in different countries. It keeps us humble and working hard.

The night started off slowly, but as Ohbijous sound check on stage started to taper off, the audience began patiently listening for the first song some in anticipation, others out

of politeness. Shoulders began standing side by side, as if the narrow venue had always been that full. The sound check was meticulous, showing the bands precision and care. Similarly, this is the attitude they took to write, record and produce Metal Meets.

We just wanted to be really careful with this record and take a lot of space and time to do it in a certain way, said Heather. We tried to focus on getting the right sounds on our instruments more so than we have in the past. And to experiment with sounds even more. All together it was a different way to approach the record.

We definitely parsed through each arrangement, each note and each lyric, Casey continued. We were just really committed to making an album that flowed well and sounded good. And it absolutely showed, even while playing a live show. 'Sligo', off 'Metal Meets' was the inaugural song for the night. Caseys gentle voice matched with **James Buntons** steady beat on the drums and prolonged frequency on the keys from **Ryan Carley** somewhat misled the audience with an impression of a timid sounding Ohbijou. (Which by the end of the show, turned out to be quite the opposite.) Mixed in was the introduction of **Jenny Mecija** and **Anissa Hart** on the strings, though the song only let the strings peek in like friends that were far too shy.

The audience looked comfortable, some head nodding, though most still didnt know what kind of music to expect. Half way through the song, the hard-hitting cymbals accompanied by robust keyboard cadences gave a clue. The grand resonance of the song had the crowd mesmerized, despite the awful red (and only red) stage lights illuminating the venue.

Wide eyed and head titled upward gazing at the bands performance, the audience became more and more enthralled, yearning for the next song while swaying and dancing. They were no longer unsure of whether to like Ohbijous set or not. Weve been playing for a few nights and its nice to have people watching, joked Casey to the audience.

'Niagara', 'Black Ice' and 'Balikbanyan' delighted the audience even further. Louder claps, cheers and woo boy and girls started to appear after each successive song. The gentleman in the front row fist pumping was certainly not shy about it.

All of a sudden, the stage seemed too small to contain Ohbijous music, literally and figuratively. The set list seemed to crescendo with intensity. Ohbijous charming banter style in between songs perhaps even gained them a few more fans. Jenny anecdotally recalls going down the New Museum slide while on this New York City trip. Its so steep, and then you just land!

Despite the stage space being far too cosy for the six piece band, Ohbijou played new material from Metal Meets with confidence, excitement and cohesiveness. It was like watching the elite group of marathon runners gear up and finish 26.2 miles (42 kilometres, as an homage to Ohbijou and my Canadianess) with perfect running form while not breaking a sweat. They made it look easy, and sound good.