



SANJOY Narayan

download central



ALL IN ONE

Flight of the Conchords straddles a number of genres, rock, folk and hip-hop included

Heard It On A Blog

Music blogs are sometimes the best introduction to bands that would otherwise remain under the radar

IFIRST HEARD Flight of the Conchords on a blog. A music blog. The blog, one of those ubiquitous mp3-embedded kinds, directed me to a hilarious 7-minute YouTube clip featuring the duo that calls itself "New Zealand's fourth most popular guitar-based digi-bongo acapella-rap-funk-comedy folk duo". In easier terms, Flight of the Conchords are a two-member band from Wellington, NZ, who began doing comedy-cum-music gigs in their hometown in the late 1990s. Today, they've grown into an international act, with an eponymous series on HBO in the US. Quite obviously, the show has been a success as its second season was flagged off last December.

You could think the comedy that the duo – Bret McKenzie and Jemaine Clement (both in their thirties) – serves up is silly, outrageous or plain funny (depending on who you are) but Flight is a versatile band that straddles a number of genres, rock, folk and hip-hop included. For me, it was yet another act to add to my continuously growing collection of new bands, again thanks to a blog.

That's the point. Music blogs are sometimes the best introduction to many of the new bands across the world that would otherwise remain under the radar. Often called mp3 blogs because their creators like to embed songs in downloadable mp3 format, music blogs are also a great outlet for small, independent record labels to market new musicians. Bands themselves use bloggers to create a buzz about them and, sometimes, even become big hits. If you remember, a few years back British rockers Arctic Monkeys created a buzz by having their local fans share audio files on the Internet and eventually become a huge hit. By the time The Arctic Monkeys' first album, *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*, was launched in 2006, it became the fastest selling debut album in the UK, largely because of the buzz in the blogosphere.

But, as with the proliferation of bands, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of music blogs. Which ones should you track? Deciding can be a challenge. To make things a bit easier, there are music blog aggregators that track mp3 blog posts and show them on their websites. The best aggregators include The Hype Machine (<http://hypem.com/>) and Elbo.ws (<http://elbo.ws/>) both of which scope out hundreds of blogs to pick out their most recent posts.

While I like to check both The Hype Machine and Elbo.ws,



MUSIC MANIA

Some blogs score by pointing you to the really obscure stuff like Japanese band Asobi Seksu

like most meta websites they can be a bit impersonal in their listing. The best aspect of individual mp3 blogs is their flavour and personality. JC, creator of the Vinyl Villain (www.thevinylvillain.blogspot.com) is obviously a great fan of Morrissey for every Friday for the past seven or eight weeks he has a *It's Friday... I'm in Love with Morrissey* post where, besides his informative and sardonic comments, he posts two or three great singles by the Mozz. Aquarium Drunkard (www.aquariumdrunkard.com), run by a former Los Angeles-based indie label founder, has daily music reviews, interviews with musicians, besides, of course, the obligatory mp3 downloads. Last week, the blog posted every song from a concert that Seattle's Fleet Foxes played in the Netherlands in November 2008 (incidentally, Fleet Foxes are a very accessible band with great harmonies and baroque style sound).

Others score by pointing you to the really obscure stuff. I found Asobi Seksu (if you must know, it approximately means casual sex in Japanese and their lead vocalist is a Japanese woman), a New York indie band on a blog called Pogoago-go (www.pogoagogo.blogspot.com) and first heard of Tame Impala, who are a modern day Byrds kind of a band, on Lypsychsuck (www.lypsychsuck.wordpress.com).

The world of music blogs can be addictive, especially if you encounter the ones that introduce you to great music. I've bought many albums based on what I've sampled of bands on mp3 blogs and that probably demonstrates why many bands and record labels turn a blind eye if a blogger writes positive stuff about a band and then (not entirely legally) uploads a track or two for you to download. Some labels and bands even actively encourage that for obvious reasons but there are many bloggers who are willing to yank mp3s off their websites if the band or their label objects. Like Elspeth Lomax who runs Nothing Compares To Elspeth (<http://elspethlomax.wordpress.com>) from Australia; her blog clearly says that she picks the music from all over the world and is more than willing to remove any mp3 if there is even the slightest of objections. It's an interesting world out there in the music blogosphere. The rules of the game are very different from the brick and mortar world.

(To stream or download the music mentioned in this column, go to www.hindustantimes.com.

And send feedback to downloadctrl@gmail.com)

THE WORLD OF MUSIC BLOGS CAN BE ADDICTIVE