



The Lovellkill

These Moments Are Momentum
(Astro Magnetix)

The basement of Stephen Pedersen's Omaha home isn't exactly what you would refer to as a "luxurious recording studio." The ceilings are low. The walls are damp. Fourteen-hour days are pretty much the norm. "But that's exactly what we needed," says Lovellkill singer/guitarist Chris Rager, now kicking back on his porch at home in Cleveland. "I think that it was clear to us what we needed to do. We were in fucking *Nebraska*. I didn't have anything else to do but sit there and record vocals and overdub guitars all day. I didn't have any other agenda but to make a great record." And that, inevitably, is what they did. But the way that we're going about explaining this is actually kind of backwards.

To really understand how The Lovellkill (Rager, guitarist Jonah Bayer, bassist/singer Carla Cherry and drummer Craig Ramsey) arrived at this point, you have to go back some four years earlier when the band formed in Cherry's basement. One rough, initial line up and one quickly self-released recorded EP followed, but all of this merely hinted at the tense, propulsive art-punk they would bring to a sharp edge on their Astro Magnetix debut. "Once Jonah came into the picture, I think we had a line up that we really wanted to do something with," Rager recalls. "With each step we've taken," adds Cherry, "from refining the songs and stepping up the recording process, we've come closer to realizing The Lovellkill as the band we want it to be."

With the help of Bayer's friend, Thursday singer Geoff Rickly, The Lovellkill would eventually meet their own rigid expectations. Bayer and Rickly had intersected a couple years earlier on the Vans Warped Tour, and in 2004 The Lovellkill guitarist had been told through a mutual friend that Rickly, along with Eyeball Records' Alex Saavedra and Marc Debiak, might be interested in releasing The Lovellkill's first full-length. (The trio had just formed Astro Magnetix.) Still, the partnership caught Bayer by surprise. "When I gave Geoff a copy of our first EP I just figured, 'Oh, here's another CD for someone. He'll forget,'" the guitarist says. "Lucky for us, he genuinely made a connection with it." That March, the band scheduled another weekend show, this time at a tiny club in New York. All three Astro Magnetix founders were in attendance. Before returning home to Cleveland, The Lovellkill would join the label's now blooming roster.

By this point, two other relationships had developed that would become crucial to the band's future. A few months earlier, Ramsey entered the picture, replacing the band's original drummer. Then there was Pedersen. Last May, when they arrived in Omaha to record *These Moments Are Momentum*, the Criteria frontman had developed into a genuine studio rat, perfecting his Pro Tools rig whenever his day job as a lawyer permitted. Though they would spend the better part of a week recording in his basement, Pedersen brought the band first to Presto! Studios (Bright Eyes, Cursive, The Faint, Challenger) in Lincoln to nail down all bass and drum tracks with AJ Mogis, who would later mix the album. "It was interesting," Bayer says, "because Stephen had never really 'produced' a record before. But we respected his opinion so much that we just let him run with it."

Pedersen became an incredibly integral part of the record (he even wrote and performed guitar parts on a few tracks), but what The Lovellkill's debut better represents is a band coming into its own. With its jittery guitar interplay, *These Moments Are Momentum* nods to the Midwestern art-punks of the early '90s, while Rager's gruff, working class vocals does the same with the Dischord roster of the late '80s. It's a convincing take on "punk" the way that some of us still remember it—defiant and ultimately kind of liberating. "When people say we're a post-punk band, that label exists for a reason," Rager insists. "It suggests that there's progression from where you've been. That's how I felt with the hardcore bands Jonah and I grew up listening to. We made them our own. I hope that's what happens with this band."