

THE NEW YORK TIMES

**"TANG WEI GIVES A PERFORMANCE OF
ASTONISHING PASSION AND COMPLEXITY.**

She is the sort of deeply expressive actress who can look ordinary one moment and utterly captivating the next." -Karen Durbin



LA WEEKLY

MUSIC

DATAROCK'S BINARY NUMBERS

Norway band creates disco anthems for the geekoid masses

BY SIRAN BABAYAN

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Saroea and Mosnes: They met at computer camp. (Photo by Bent René Synnev)

Who knew music this shit-hot could come from a mountainous Norwegian town known as the "City of Rain"? Following in the footsteps of fellow townspeople Royksopp, Kings of Convenience and Sondre Lerche, Fredrik Saroea and Ketil Mosnes formed Datarock in 2000 while students in Bergen, Norway (where "there's still lots of black metal"). Or, as Saroea once put it in an online interview, "We fell in love. He became pregnant and gave birth to a small Casio watch. As our love grew, the Casio watch grew to become a Casio keyboard. And that's how we became Datarock."

They gigged around for a couple of years, released a few EPs and finished their full-length debut in 2005 on their own label, Young Aspiring Professionals. After signing with Canada's Nettwerk Music Group this winter, Saroea (vocals, guitar) and Mosnes (backing vocals, bass) finally saw the stateside release of *Datarock Datarock*, an album of seriously silly and dweebishly sexy contradictions that'll have you shouting from Bergen's seven mountaintops, /

have heard the future, and it's all about the past.

Yes, Datarock are riding the dance-rock wave (a win-win situation, if you ask us) that's gotten ahold of the world by the disco balls and won't . . . let . . . go. And yes, they recycle the obvious '80s new-wave and '70s art-funk influences. (What, you never liked Devo or the Talking Heads?) But they're less blatant plagiarism than an exercise in expected surprises, because whatever nostalgic elements Saroea and Mosnes have thrown into the heap, Datarock has come out sounding showroom-fresh, funky and just plain fun.

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"We'll reinvent everything good and decent in the last 30 years of pop culture," says Saroea, just before the band embarks on a brief North American tour opening for the Kaiser Chiefs. "And in the haze of our cross-referencing intertextuality, we'll make

everyone relive the fun of the dance floor.”

Okay, let's start with the Datarock uniform of Vans and red tracksuits, yours for only \$199 via their MySpace. Sure, tracksuits are as old as the Beastie Boys, going back even further to the aforementioned Akron, Ohio, band that still has an affinity for sporting hazmat suits. But it's the tufts of chest hair peeking out from under all that polyester and the Porsche glasses that add an element of cool danger, perfect if they were posing for an '80s Drakkar Noir cologne ad. And while Mosnes is the pasty-faced one, Saroea is darker, with the profile of a Chippendales dancer and the big, one-sided hair of Prince past.

Then there's *Datarock Datarock's* knack for making you laugh simultaneously with and at the two. “Bulldozer” starts with Arcade Fire-ish guitar riffs and lyrics about BMX being better than sex. (Not quite, if you live in a city with such high precipitation.) The duo give the geekoid masses an entire anthem with “Computer Camp Love.” Think Kraftwerk doing *Grease's* “Summer Nights” as sung by Devo, while conjuring up images of floppy-disk sniffing and over-the-keyboard fondling. “We've actually met Gerald Casale in Norway,” remembers Saroea. “And in L.A., Mark Mothersbaugh was kind enough to give us the grand tour of his studio, Mutato Muzika. Bob 2 met us in the door, and believe it or not, he actually referred to himself as Bob 2.”

Saroea can sing whatever nerdy nonsense he wants because he makes plenty of sexy time, especially with the badass bass line of the current single “Fa Fa Fa.” What did left-footed, indie hipsters ever do to deserve a song dripping with so much funk, soul and sex that it could knock Bootsy Collins off his platforms? “I need a hit/I need a hit of nutrition/If you want to whip me into shape/I need a plan or a mission,” Saroea commands as if penning a health-club jingle. These aren't fighting words, they're what you hear during jazzercise. And on “Sex Me Up,” he goes a step further by proclaiming, “Get on my hands and knees/On your command I'll freeze.” Now, we don't wanna know what all the giving and receiving talk is about on “Night Flight to Uranus” — loads of Bow Wow Wow tribal drumming, available only on the CD's import version — but it got us hot under our own hoodies just the same.

The album culminates with the post-coital, snuggly “The Most Beautiful Girl,” which has Saroea swapping spit with Norwegian pop star Annie. This is a duet so cheesy it's as if the two are lying between slices of bread in a hot pan. Actually, it's not so much a love song as it is verbal molestation that'll make you feel soiled and impure. Still, it got us picturing a piano, a captain's hat, and a town in the desert with lotsa lights.

Datarock's shows are known to have as many as 30 people onstage. So, who knows? Saroea might call upon you to make muskrat love.

Datarock | *Datarock Datarock* | Netzwerk

Datarock appears with Honeycut and Foreign Born at the Echo, 1822 Sunset Blvd., L.A.; Wed., Oct. 3, 8:30 p.m. (213) 413-8200.