

= Romeo Void =

Romeo Void was an American new wave / post punk band from San Francisco , California , formed in 1979 . The band primarily consisted of saxophonist Benjamin Bossi , vocalist Debora Iyall , guitarist Peter Woods , and bassist Frank Zincavage . The band went through four drummers , starting with Jay Derrah and ending with Aaron Smith . The band released three albums , It 's a Condition , Benefactor and Instincts , along with one EP . They are best known for the songs " Never Say Never " and " A Girl in Trouble (Is a Temporary Thing) " ; the latter became a Top 40 pop single .

The band was started at the San Francisco Art Institute by Iyall and Zincavage . They released a single on the recently formed 415 Records before recording their debut album , which has been deemed a " masterpiece of American post @-@ punk " . The success of their second release , a 4 @-@ song EP , Never Say Never resulted in a distribution deal with Columbia Records . The band continued to release music and tour until they broke up in 1985 . The members have reunited briefly over the years . Iyall has continued to pursue music as a side project . Iyall garnered acclaim as a skilled lyricist who explored themes like sexuality and alienation from a female perspective with " searing imagery " .

= = 1979 : Formation = =

Romeo Void formed at the San Francisco Art Institute in February 1979 . Vocalist Debora Iyall occasionally visited the Bay Area to see Patti Smith perform . She decided to pursue an art education after reading a fortune cookie . " It was in the late ' 70s at the Indochina Friendship Booth at the annual Fourth of July streetfair in Eureka , California , " she said . " I got a fortune cookie that said ' Art is your fate , don 't debate . ' That next January , I was enrolled in an art school in San Francisco . " She began frequenting the Mabuhay Gardens , a popular nightclub , to see local alternative rock groups like The Nuns , the Mutants , Crime , and the Avengers . She also formed the Mommers and Poppers , a punk parody band that covered 1960s tunes with guitarist Peter Woods , an English Major at SF State and drummer Jay Derrah , . Iyall was originally hesitant to perform because she was overweight : " After seeing Patti Smith , I still had it in my mind that you had to be skinny to be up there [on stage] , but after going to the Mabuhay [...] you just do whatever you want , be whoever you want , just make it happen . "

Bassist Frank Zincavage met Iyall at the SF Art Institute ; the two hit it off and discussed putting a band together . They formed one with Woods and Derrah a few weeks later , drawing inspiration from the " burgeoning local punk and post @-@ punk scenes " . Iyall recruited Woods because she enjoyed playing with him in the Mommers and Poppers . " [It] seemed only natural that we invite Peter Woods to join us [... He] played clean and was a natural on rhythm guitar . " Romeo Void officially formed on Valentine 's Day in 1979 . According to Iyall , the name Romeo Void referred to " a lack of romance " and came to mind after they saw a local magazine with the headline " Why single women can 't get laid in San Francisco . " The band practiced in Iyall 's flat in Mission District . It was decided that the group would embrace punk ideals despite the possibility that they become associated with the new wave movement . " Even though I was going to the [Mabuhay Gardens] so much , I also had criticisms : Everyone was leaning against the wall wearing black , " Iyall said . " I guess we were considered new wave , but for me Romeo Void was a reaction against the regimentation of everyone having to be bleached blond and everything being about despair and no future , when I thought the do @-@ it @-@ yourself thing should encompass all the different kinds of emotions , and all the different colors . [...] I was proud of being American Indian , so I purposely never bleached my hair blond . "

= = 1980 ? 1982 : It 's a Condition , Benefactor , and mainstream success = =

The band became busy playing shows at clubs and warehouses around San Francisco , and quickly became popular . Saxophonist Benjamin Bossi was added to the lineup as an " accident "

when Lyall met him while he worked in a deli . The group released their first single , " White Sweater " , which consisted of the title track and a cover of Danish musician Jørgen Ingmann 's popular instrumental composition " Apache " , in February 1981 on a recently founded local label called 415 Records . They worked on the recording of their debut album , It 's a Condition , with producer David Kahne . Before recording began , Derrah left the band and was replaced by John " Stench " Hanes , who had previously played with Pearl Harbor and the Explosions . Romeo Void 's debut was critically acclaimed upon its release through 415 in July 1981 , and introduced Romeo Void 's " unique blend of jazz , funk , rock and confrontational poetry " . Allmusic writer Stewart Mason later heralded it as one of the " masterpieces of American post @-@ punk " . Indie labels were enthusiastic with promotions and the band embarked on several nationwide tours . Eventually Haines left the band , leaving Larry Carter to fill the drummer position .

The sudden surge in popularity was disorienting to Lyall . " It was frightening : we played a college in Santa Barbara , and there were all these blond people crowding the stage , and I thought ' These are the people who hated me in high school ! ' When you grow up being ' outside ' ? because I wasn 't white , and I was fat , and always a bit of a free thinker ? it was strange . It was like , ' uh @-@ oh , I must be doing something wrong ? they like me ! ' " Highly successful mainstream artists like Ann Wilson and Ric Ocasek were eager to meet the band . Ocasek extended an invitation to collaborate at his Synchro Sound studio in Boston . The recording sessions in Boston resulted in the Never Say Never EP in January 1982 . The title track became (arguably) their best @-@ known song and has remained synonymous with the band ever since . The song was also featured in the 1984 romantic teen drama Reckless , which was the debut film of Jennifer Grey starring Aidan Quinn and Daryl Hannah . Additionally , the success of the single directly led to 415 Records signing a deal with Columbia Records , which elevated the indie label 's roster to major @-@ label status . Romeo Void released their second album , entitled Benefactor , in November 1982 . The album appeared at No. 119 on the Billboard 200 . Benefactor was noticeably more commercial sounding than previous endeavors ; the music was made more danceable and swearing was removed on the song " Never Say Never " . The different approach in the sound resulted in comparisons to Blondie , which Allmusic writer William Ruhlmann suggested was a deliberate attempt by Columbia . Lyall stated that there was more pressure to write sexually laced lyrics for Benefactor : " I do like to be provocative , and I definitely have access to my sexuality , and as a topic I find it ripe , but I wasn 't ever going to be a sex @-@ pot diva , so that was kind of odd . " She also said there was pressure to produce more singles .

= = 1983 ? present : Instincts , break @-@ up , and post @-@ band endeavors = =

A third and final album was again helmed by David Kahne , which Allmusic writer Stewart Mason speculated was a " reaction against the more commercial sound of Benefactor . By this time , Carter had been replaced by veteran session drummer Aaron Smith . Instincts was released in October 1984 , debuted at No. 68 on the Billboard 200 , and proved to be the band 's best @-@ selling album . It also launched their most successful single , " A Girl in Trouble (Is a Temporary Thing) , " which broke the Billboard Top 40 and peaked at No. 35 . Critical reactions were positive . Despite being the band 's most successful effort to date , Columbia pulled the band 's promotional support while on a nationwide tour . " The very next town we got to after they made that decision , there wasn 't an A & R person there , " said Lyall . " [There] was no local person there , there were no interviews and in @-@ stores arranged as they had been . All that just ground to a halt . " The band returned to San Francisco and soon broke up . Constant touring has been cited by Lyall as the primary reason for the break @-@ up . " You get tired of each other , and you get intolerant of being uncomfortable and away from your family and your friends . " According to a VH1 reunion episode , the issue of Lyall 's weight was the reason for the label dropping them . In 2003 , Lyall agreed with this claim : " Howie sold us from 415 to Columbia Records , and they were like ' Who 's this fat chick ? ' They decided that was as far as it was going to get , and pulled their support . " Crawdaddy ! writer Denise Sullivan stated that the label spoke to Lyall about losing weight , but she subsequently refused . In 2010 , Lyall declined to discuss the issue , but added that she may not be taking full

responsibility in the matter .

Iyall released a solo album entitled *Strange Language* with former band members Bossi and Smith in 1986 . Afterward she pursued a career as an art teacher . The band reunited briefly for a live performance in 1993 . In 2004 , Romeo Void was featured on an episode of VH1 's *Bands Reunited* . Bossi had sustained too much hearing damage over the years and was unable to perform , although he did meet up with the band again and observed the reunion performance in an adjacent room . Iyall has continued to dabble in music related projects and events . " I still like to sing and I still like to perform , " she said . In 2003 she was involved in a musical project called *Knife in Water* . She began collaborating with Peter Dunne , who was known as Peter Bilt when he played guitar for Pearl Harbor and the Explosions . Iyall and Dunne performed at a support benefit for *Crawdaddy* ! founder Paul Williams in June 2009 , and performed at a concert honoring 415 Records later that September . They released an album entitled *Stay Strong* in 2010 .

= = Music = =

Romeo Void has generally been classified as a new wave or post @-@ punk band . Some critics have noted dance elements in the music . According to Stewart Mason , writing for Allmusic , " [The] band 's muscular blend of Joy Division 's atmospheric and the Gang of Four 's rattling momentum , with Benjamin Bossi 's splattering free jazz saxophone coloring everything , made Romeo Void one of the strongest of the American post @-@ punk bands . The St. Petersburg Times wrote that they " had no trouble creating a signature sound for [themselves with a] scratchy guitar , soulful sax , [and] tight , precise drums . " The New York Times stated that they sounded like " an art @-@ school band , with its textural complexity [and] touches of jazz and funk " Saxophone player Benjamin Bossi has been observed as the ingredient that " set the band apart " and showed a " talent for both improvisation and arrangement . " Alan Niester , writing for The Globe and Mail , said that he weaved " in and out [...] like a snake charmer " and reminded him of Andy Mackay , a saxophonist that played with Roxy Music .

Liam Lacey , also writing for The Globe and Mail , described Iyall 's voice as " sultry [and] sexy " , while Mason called it " powerful " . Her style has sometimes been compared to Chrissie Hynde , vocalist for the Pretenders . Richard Harrington of The Washington Post acknowledged the similarity , but also noted the influence of other singers in " Never Say Never " where Iyall mixed the " aggressive bitchiness of [Hynde] , the coy confrontational tactics of Patty Donahue of the Waitresses and the slack sensuality of Debbie Harry of the earliest Blondie . " Iyall used to find the comparison annoying , but eventually warmed to it : " When people said I sounded like her , I 'd say , ' Oh yeah , thanks a lot . ' But this year , I 've fallen in love with Learning To Crawl so now I don 't care if people want to make comparisons . " After a live show in 1982 , Niester contended that she was the weakest part of the group and had the " vocal range of an automobile horn " . Billboard writer Kathy Gillis wrote after a concert two years later that Iyall exhibited a " dramatic range that , while not extreme in either direction , was touching . "

Patti Smith had a great influence on Iyall . " [She was] someone who was both a rock singer and a poet , " she said . " She combined things I was interested in . Plus , she wasn 't a trumped @-@ up sex symbol . She was herself on stage . That appealed to me . It looked like something I could do . You didn 't have to look like all the other singers . " Iyall was highly critical of the music of the day and found inspiration in other mediums . " I hate rock and roll right now . It 's turned into some new kind of stupid religion ... I 'd rather listen to Billie Holiday , maybe Tom Waits . Actually , I 'll admit I like The Bangles ? they have a great sound . But I 'd just as soon read novels or paint pictures as listen to music . I love language ? plain speech , used in an enigmatic , subliminal way ; I 'm not much tied to the literal . "

= = Lyrics = =

Iyall was observed by Mother Jones to be among a new group of female fronted rock bands that displayed a " tough , wry , street @-@ wise , [and] cynical " attitude and sought to redefine the role

of women in rock music . She developed a sizable following for her writing that covered topics like " frustrated desire [and] sexually motivated rage " from a female perspective . Critics praised her lyrics for their " searing imagery " , " seething poetics " , and " [dark intelligence] " " My approach was always that I had something to say , I had a point of view , " Iyall said , commenting on her outspokenness . " I remember seeing Penelope from the Avengers at the Mabuhay Gardens and thinking , I can do that . I have something to say . "

Romeo Void 's best known song is " Never Say Never " , which contains the famous line " I might like you better if we slept together . " Allmusic writer Heather Phares has argued that Iyall 's " teasing , existential musings [...] predated and predicted the aloof yet frank sexuality of early- and mid- ' 90s artists such as Elastica and Liz Phair " . Phares concluded that the song was " a subversive , influential classic " and " one of new wave 's most distinctive and innovative moments . " The song has been covered by many artists , among them are Queens of the Stone Age and Amanda Blank . The song " A Girl in Trouble (Is a Temporary Thing) " , their highest @-@ charting single , was reportedly written as a response to Michael Jackson 's hit song " Billie Jean " , but can also be seen as a tribute to women who have experienced traumatizing events . Iyall also wrote songs that touched on themes like social alienation (" Undercover Kept ") and generation gaps (" Chinatown ") .

= = Personnel = =

= = Discography = =

= = = Albums & EPs = = =

= = = Singles = = =