



Daughter, a London-based three-piece manned by a trio of exotically-named musicians – Elena Tonra, Igor Haefeli Remi Aguilera – make music that is as striking, as unique a blend of sounds, atmospheres and emotions, as its membership is geographically diverse in origin (Elena is of Irish-Italian heritage, Igor from Switzerland and Remi French).

So as I chat with Remi, the band's percussionist, I'm interested to learn how they create their dramatic music; intense yet stripped-back, honest yet somehow elusive. Is it a collaborative process?

"Elena has always done the lyrics, and very often the melody," he explains, in excellent American and French-accented English. "I don't think I'd want it any other way. It'd be terrible – I just cannot do it!"

For the rest, though, "it kind of depends. It used to be, the earlier material would always be Elena with song structure, lyrics and melody, and then we would play guitars and drums on top of that," but now, with their second album, *Not To Disappear*, out this month, "it was more of a band collaboration, where all three people bring ideas early on in the process."

And the band had a lot to live up to, with album number two. Their debut – 2013's *If You Leave* – won huge critical acclaim, and amassed a growing band of admirers for Daughter. Remi's reaction to the success is a humble one: "I don't think we saw it as a massive album, I think we were just very lucky that some people somehow connected to it, and that's what amazed us. There seemed to be, somehow, a universal feeling. That was the part that we all really enjoyed: we somehow managed to touch people in a way we had not expected."

So, inevitably, he admits, "we wanted to be pleased with it, and knew that there would be some kind of pressure, but the pressure was coming from us – to make something that is relevant or interesting."

All perfectionists, sometimes "pushing in different directions" in the studio, they seem nevertheless to have avoided heated arguments both by trusting each other's sensibilities ("Alright, I guess I trust you guys to say that this will be better for the song") and by easing the self-inflicted pressure a bit by the means of having rented out their own studio space this time round, "so we could basically go demo the songs and write songs and parts whenever we wanted. So if one day you don't feel inspired by anything, or if

everybody's in a strange mood, then it's probably just better to leave and say we'll come back with fresher minds and ears."

Another big influence in the making of *Not To Disappear* has been the live reception that *If You Leave* received. "For this one, we took all the experience from playing all the shows and festivals (and there is a lot of them), and we were influenced by the energy that came from playing those shows. The bigger the audience became, the louder or somehow more intense the songs seemed to become live."

Having joined up with Elena and Igor while all three were studying in London, for Remi, life as a drummer seems to have been something that was always predestined. Despite having no particular musical heritage, family lore tells of how, as a 2 or 3 year old ("dressed in a *Spiderman* costume") he was brought along to a music school where a cousin was having drum lessons. "Apparently this is when I told my entire family that I wanted to play drums." Formal lessons, taking in jazz and classical percussion, followed, and "somehow, it seemed to be the only thing that I was able to just keep doing. The drums win – I can't explain it. I don't think, I just do it."

And it seems that his expertise and experience really came into their own in the studio this time around. Explaining the process of song selection for *Not To Disappear*, he tells a revealing tale of how the song *No Care* came to make it – at the last moment – on to the album. "I didn't have a drum part until the very last day in the studio, when we said 'Oh, this one, this demo could be on [the album] as well'. I was already exhausted and somehow had to just come up with the drums for the different parts, so I just said 'Leave me in the studio, press record, and just don't talk to me for about an hour!'... After an hour I came out of that studio exhausted, and then we decided

to go with a bunch of samples that I did. So I'll definitely remember the process of recording that one!"

And the end result is stunning – fiercely (almost viciously) percussive and propulsive, one of the album's standout tracks. What other highlights can we look forward to, among the new tracks, when they tour the album?

"Erm, live – I don't know, because we're actually in a few days going to hopefully finish rehearsing all the new songs, so I don't know which ones we're going to be playing live. But *Doing The Right Thing* is a song that all of us were really excited about, just because it was one of those that we'd rehearsed and written together in a room – it was one of the first times that we were able to do that, because of that little rehearsal space. And *How* – I remember at rehearsals, I always pushed for it."

We are chatting during an unscheduled break in the band's touring schedule. Just back from Asia, where they played Japan and Singapore, a festival in South Korea where they were due to appear got cancelled, so Remi is at his parents' home in France – "Right in the middle, a place called Clermont-Ferrand. Not a lot of people tend to know about it, unless they're into rugby or Michelin tyres."

With only a few weeks having elapsed since the horrific attacks in Paris, as a musician – particularly a French musician – I wonder how he feels about the situation.

Speaking hesitantly for the first time in our conversation, he replies. "It's something that was really worrying. Even though I didn't grow up in Paris, I have a lot of friends and family

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who were in Paris on the Monday [before], right around... where some of the shootings happened. One of my friends lives right on one of those streets out there, and... They were all having a good time. And then five days later... I hadn't been in Paris for a long time, and I love that city. It was weird, I just had to call everybody, making sure..."

But he rallies, saying firmly: "It's a crazy time, and it's amazing to see the reaction of people, who have clearly said: 'We're not going to fear being in Paris. This is our city.'"

In terms of whether it will affect him on stage, he insists: "I'm not trying to ignore or deny it, I just don't want to think about it. You don't want to be scared of something that could potentially happen. It's the same as the way I'm prepared to take the Tube a lot, even after those horrible events happened in London. It's a horrible tragedy but you have to keep doing what you do because otherwise they – people like those people – will win."

So what is a Daughter live show like? The music, on record, is so intense, served up with such an emotional kick, that I wonder whether they concern themselves with fancy visuals, or simply let their songs speak for themselves.

"That's something that we've recently thought about. With the first album we never really brought visuals to our show – and by visuals I just mean pretty lights that would help connect with the music. For this one we have a big idea of trying to bring the visual aspect to it. We're going



Remi, Elena and Igor

to be bringing a light designer with us through all our live shows, which is going to be amazing.

"I mean, this is how we're going to start, but hopefully people will still connect mainly with the music."

Having had the chance to immerse myself in the gorgeous, lush, troubling, moving songs from Daughter's second album – which is released on the very day the band play Cambridge – I'm fairly certain he's right. Talking of the show itself, he promises: "It'll be fun, it'll be the start of a crazy-busy experience, but hopefully really beautiful." Without a doubt.

Daughter,
Cambridge
Corn Exchange,
Friday, January
15, 7.30pm.
Tickets £20
from *cambridge*
livetrust.co.uk /
(01223) 357851.

SON *and* daughter

Daughter bring their intense and atmospheric music to Cambridge Corn Exchange this month, as they launch second album *Not To Disappear*. Jude Clarke gets the lowdown from drummer Remi Aguilera.