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When I meet Naked members Agnes Gryczkowska — effervescent, wiggling her shoulders to the Rihanna soundtrack pulsing through the studio — and Alex Johnston — reticent, a muscle twitching in his clenched jaw as the camera is trained upon him — I learn that they met in Edinburgh and are now based in London. I learn that Gryczkowska is a curator at Kensington's Serpentine Gallery; I learn that they listen to Merzbow and Pan Sonic with some classical music on the side. And as personal lives go, I don't learn a whole lot more. But from a band whose name marries connotations of utter exposure with inherent un-Googleability, I'd be naive to expect otherwise.

Following the release of their debut EP "Youth Mode" last year, Naked's forthcoming LP *Zone* lurches to darker, more-distorted depths. To the eerie dream pop of "Youth Mode", *Zone* is the screech of warped machinery; where "Youth Mode" balanced anxiety with hope, *Zone* is a dystopian frenzy (appropriately, the first video from the album will be shot by Hendrik Schneider, noted for his work with Verement). Says Gryczkowska, sporting a bubblegum pink puffa jacket and black hair twisted into double buns: "It was quite representative of what we're trying to say, and how we see ourselves and society changing over time. It was gradually deteriorating and becoming more harsh, more metallic, less hopeful, more and more...". And the all-important take from her mum? "This is terrible! You've become Satanists!"

As in "Youth Mode", the album expresses unease with the unchecked proliferation of technology. Naked are quick to assure me they're no Luddites: "Our sound is completely reliant on technology", they acknowledge — but equally, they're preoccupied with its percolation throughout all aspects of our existence. "It's almost like it's become part

of our bodies," Gryczkowska tells me. "It's almost prosthesis." The anxiety of what it means to be human in an age of technology advances is reflected sonically throughout *Zone*, as delicate vocals struggle out of thunderous instrumentation before dissolving back into the noise. According to earnest-eyed singer: "The sound in terms of instrumentation is very distorted and metallic, and quite harsh, cold... then the vocal tries to break through, and we see it grasp at the ruins of its own humanity."

In standout track "Slow", the human voice is afforded a rare moment of prominence. Percussive clamour periodically falls away to leave only an unearthly choral voice, a remnant Gryczkowska attributes to her upbringing within the Catholic Church in Poland. The choral voice is willfully stripped of context, mirroring the dearth of foundational values — religion, family — Naked perceives in the present day. "Everything in the past that used to make us feel really secure," she declares, "these things have almost completely disappeared." To Naked, we're living in an anomic, isolated state — hence track two, aptly titled "Anomic". "I feel disenfranchised," mutters Johnston, fiddling with the collar of his black bomber (it's over a black t-shirt, paired with black trousers, which are tucked into black socks, which peer out of — plot twist — black trainers).

Out of the despair, however, the band are carving a semblance of utopia. In the face of a society desperately perfecting their sickly-sweet online personas — "Everybody's telling you what you should be", Johnston deplores — Naked are all about authenticity. Gryczkowska explains: "You create your own zone, your own bubble, which isn't necessarily happy or beautiful, but it's your own thing." And, once you've stepped into Naked's zone, I suspect, you'll never fully make back it out.

**Piece by piece, far-side noise pop duo Naked are building their very own utopia out of dystopian rubble.**



## Naked Profile Transcript

*Rollacoaster Magazine, June 2016*

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As in ‘Youth Mode’, the album expresses unease with the unchecked proliferation of technology. Naked are quick to assure me they’re no Luddites – “our sound is completely reliant on technology”, they acknowledge – but equally, they’re preoccupied with its percolation throughout all aspects of our existence. “It’s almost like it’s become part of our bodies,” Gryczkowska tells me. “It’s almost like prosthesis.” The anxiety of what it means to be human as technology advances is reflected sonically throughout ‘Zone’, as delicate vocals struggle out of thunderous instrumentation before dissolving back into the noise. According to the earnest-eyed singer, “The sound in terms of instrumentals is very distorted and metallic, and quite harsh, cold, and then the vocal tries to break through, and we see it grasping at the ruins of its own humanity.”

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