

Bosnian Rainbows is a new band featuring Teri Gender Bender (Le Butcherettes), Nicci Kasper (Kudu, KRS-ONE), Deantoni Parks (John Cale, The Mars Volta), and Omar Rodriguez Lopez (The Mars Volta, At the Drive-In). The group formed during the summer of 2012 and will release their self-titled debut LP in early summer 2013 on Sargent House. While the four members' respective pedigrees are as distinctive as the names they're attached to, the group itself is an entity all its own, unlike any other project any of them have been in. You could argue that they're using it to redefine their entire approach to making music.

This new approach also functions aesthetically. Onstage, the members group themselves together so closely that the backline, once assembled, is literally a single structure. Stalking the front of the stage is vocalist Gender Bender, a shape-shifting conduit of interstellar energy, seizing the microphone like a dagger. No stranger to the spotlight, her shamanistic presence in *Bosnian Rainbows* elicits a physical response from much of the audience, enraptured with her trance-like gesticulations and impassioned pleas. Behind her, Rodriguez Lopez conjures abbreviated barbs of dissonant funk from his guitar, lost, it seems, in the sheer ecstasy of the moment. In this context, his legendary status as a progressive rock icon seems virtually incidental, and much of what he's known for remote. To his left sits Parks, the human timepiece, playing the drum kit as nobody has before him. And, as if machine-like precision were simply par for the course, he is simultaneously playing a keyboard. Famously cool, Parks is the picture of control, effortlessly firing out rhythms at once both funky and robotic, unaware of the supposed impossibility of what he's doing. Which brings us to Nicci Kasper, the keyboard protégée, his concentration fixed on the task at hand. Masterful in focusing his instrument's infinite possibilities, be they incessant low-frequency throbs or soaring, symphonic flourishes, Kasper's contribution to the band's sound brings with it an emotional depth which can only be described as *epic*.

The story of *Bosnian Rainbows* is one you might typically expect to emerge from the fertile, cross-breeding ranks of constantly intermingling artists. Rodriguez Lopez befriended Gender Bender after seeing her duo, *Le Butcherettes*, perform in Guadalajara in 2009. While working on arrangements for that band's debut album, *Sin Sin Sin*, Omar (at first strictly producing, but eventually playing bass on the album as well) and Gender Bender discovered an inspiring collaborative spark between them. Around the same time, Rodriguez Lopez began a series of studio projects with Parks and Kasper during repeat trips through New York. *Le Butcherettes*, meanwhile, relocated to Los Angeles, and soon found themselves touring with *Jane's Addiction*, the *Yeah Yeah Yeahs*, *Flaming Lips*, and *Deftones*. Soon after, Rodriguez Lopez joined *Le Butcherettes* on bass as a fully-fledged member and in 2012, he released *Octopus Kool Aid*, the first of a series of solo albums featuring Gender Bender on vocals.

A tour of Europe in support of *Octopus Kool Aid* had been booked for August, so Rodriguez Lopez, Gender Bender, Kasper and Parks convened in a Hamburg studio in order to rehearse. Committed to distancing himself from the "dictator" role he'd become infamous for in *The Mars Volta* (as well as the *ORLG*), and reinvigorated from his recent stint in the reformed *At the Drive-In*, Rodriguez Lopez shifted gears, seizing the

opportunity to start a new group. Rather than rehearse *Octopus Kool Aid*, the quartet spontaneously birthed a collaborative songwriting process which produced immediate, inspiring results. With each of the four contributing equally, the new group quickly developed its own direction and vision, taking on a life of its own. Omar is eager to point out that this group should in no way be mistaken for one of the many incarnations of his solo band.

Christening themselves Bosnian Rainbows, they embarked on the tour and set about developing their skills as a live band, refining their new songs and defining their aesthetic. By the time the tour ended, the web was buzzing with excitement. Invigorated by that success, the group ventured into Hamburg's Clouds Hill Studio that October and recorded what would be their debut album. The music they recorded is remarkable, haunting and powerful. Bosnian Rainbows is no less adventurous or fearless than the music the four of them have previously released, but perhaps it's more immediate, more accessible. The reference points are wild and varied: early 80s post-punk and new wave, corrosive synth-pop, and Peter Gabriel's *So* album being a noteworthy influence. The songs themselves are anthemic, yet still personal, from the grey-stained melancholia of "Worthless", through the widescreen, slow-burning drama and romance of "Turtle Neck", to the churning and intense catharsis of "Mother, Father, Set Us Free". It's clear, however, that these tracks are only a beginning; this is a group with abundant with life, a future that could stretch as far as they want it to.

Bosnian Rainbows have been on the road consistently since August 2012, touring extensively in North America, Europe, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. They made their U.S. festival debut at last September's Fun Fun Fun Fest, and appeared at Festival Vive Latino at Mexico City's Foro Sol Stadium in March 2013.