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MY Chemical Romance

MYSTERY JETS - THE GO! TEAM -
THE SUBWAYS - LONDON FASHION WEEK

**+ WIN A PAIR OF
DESIGNER TRAINERS**

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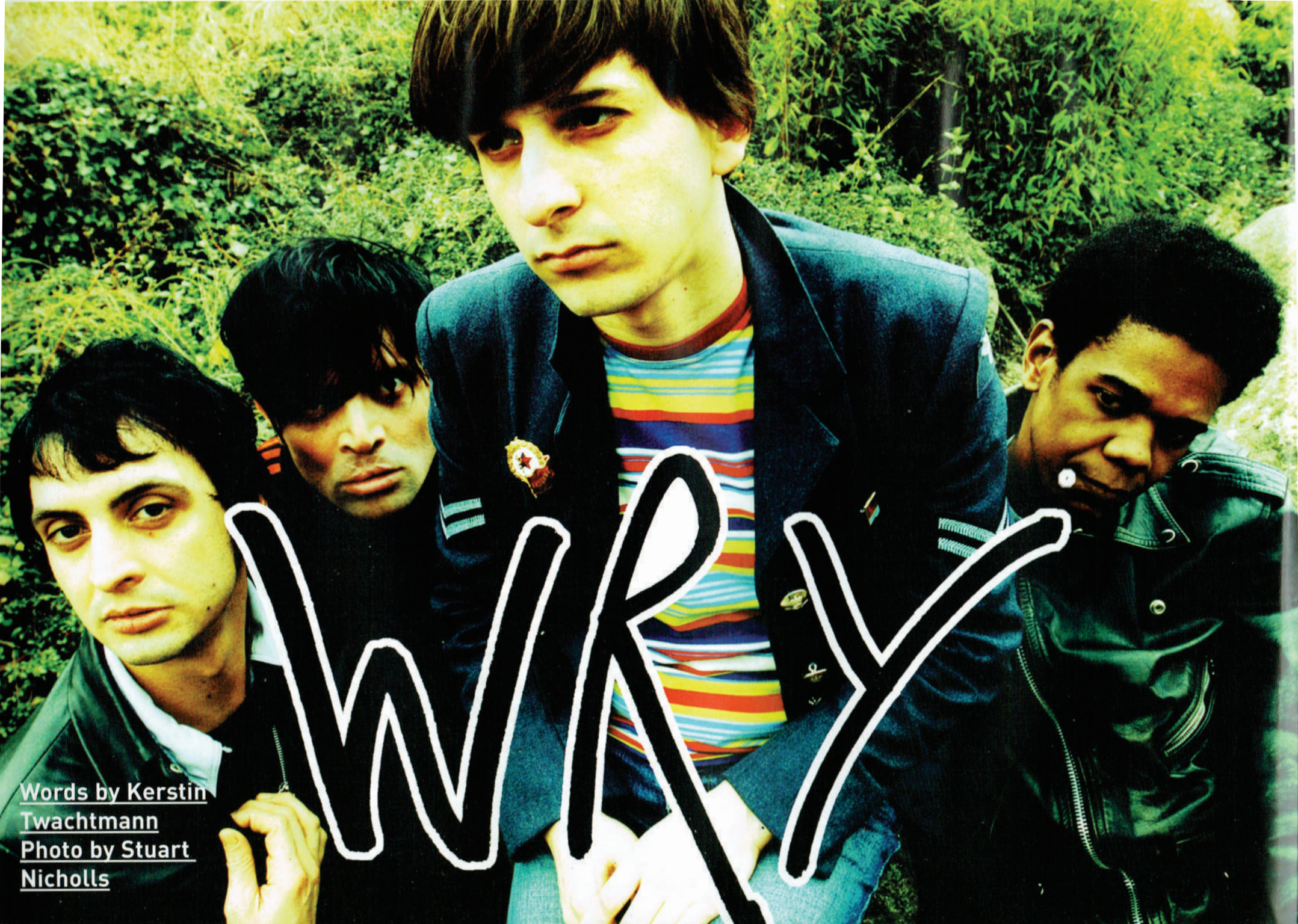
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11/05



Words by Kerstin
Twachtmann
Photo by Stuart
Nicholls

It's 11 in the morning and we've arrived at a studio off Hoxton Square. We ring the buzzer, and Tim Wheeler answers the door. "Hi," he says. "How's it going?" As we head inside a figure appears in a nearby doorway. "Morning morning!" calls Wry front man Mario, emerging from the studio's closet sized kitchen clutching three cups of tea. He is dressed in skintight black jeans, an equally fitted black leather jacket, reflective aviator sunglasses, and grinning from ear to ear. This studio is only big enough for one superstar, and Mario has just won round one.

The name might not mean much here, but in their native Brazil Wry are famous for pioneering the underground rock scene and regularly play to crowds of 1000+. If it weren't for their thick accents you'd be forgiven for mistaking their Anglo centric sound for something homegrown; they have all the hallmarks of a British rock band, from the influences (Blur, Sex Pistols) right down to the clothes and hair. Their sharp, heartfelt line of indie/rock has caught the attention of Strokes producer Gordon Raphael, who produced three of the tracks on their new album, and now indie royalty Tim Wheeler from Ash is sat at the mixing desk, producing a further three. But if I'm star struck, I'm not the only one. "I was picking up a bass amp with Tim last night," Mario whispers across the table, "and Chris Martin called! Tim was like 'I've just been playing Mario the new album, he really likes it!'" But then two minutes later, as Tim starts explaining what's happening in the studio, Mario frowns and whacks him on the arm. "Say something good about us," he demands. "Wry are an exceptional talent from Brazil," says Tim obediently. Eventually we find a quieter spot to set up for the interview. Bassist

Chokito and guitarist Lu are both due to record today and seem slightly nervous. Absent drummer Renato Bizar strolls in three hours later and sits slumped in a chair, smiling a happy but pained smile. He celebrated finishing his drum recording the day before by stealing and drinking a bottle of whisky Tim had been given as a gift. Mario, meanwhile, marches over to the table, grabs the very professional looking journalist's notebook on the table and starts writing... "Mario... is... beautiful," he says aloud. He stops. "Beautiful? Or handsome? Handsome as well," he writes neatly underneath. Then he pulls up a chair and sits attentively, ready to answer questions.

So, we begin, you're pretty huge in Brazil?

"Yeah, in the underground scene," says Mario. "You could say that. Not in the mainstream.

No?

"No, because we sing in English, and they DON'T speak English in Brazil only Portuguese."

"But you can see us on MTV Brazil," says guitarist Lu.

"We play to 400, 500 people. In my city we play to more, like 1000. But we've played bigger and festivals and main shows – like the first show of the release of the album, we had more people," Mario explains matter of factly.

So not very underground then?

"When they say 'underground' for them I think it's different," explains Mario. "What do you know about the American underground?"

Not much....

"It's similar. It's different from the English underground. It's very strong, there are a lot of labels and promoters and underground festivals, which brings 5000 people, but we still call it underground because it's not that big."

In Brazil indie music is apparently something of a rarity. Uninspired by what they call 'the mainstream' (Mario describes its participants as 'beginners') they turned instead to the kind of music you'd expect find in any NME reading teenager's room.

"We were the first band – no, there was one band before who played the same kind of thing – but we were the first that people noticed, the first time that people started to see a band who dress like us and listen to the music that we listen to," says Mario.

Wry had success, fans, two albums in the bag and a secured place in Brazil's rock history, but in 2001 they made the brave move over to England, leaving behind friends and family to start anew.

"We came with a LOT of people, all our gang," explains Mario. "We were nine in the beginning. Only very close, like a family. When we moved to the second house, which was a big house, we were eleven people altogether. We called ourselves the Goo Goo Gang. It was the people we used to hang out with, they used to surround us in shows and everywhere. They would get a coach to go to other cities, like 48 people in the bus."

But since moving they've struggled to gain the same kind of recognition. They've taken jobs in coffee shops to pay the rent and built up the band from scratch. Asking why they've substituted fame in sunny Brazil for near obscurity in freezing England is apparently a stupid question.

"Because of the music!" exclaims Mario, as if the answer were obvious. "The bands! We love Sex Pistols and Blur and these English bands – Jesus Mary Chain, My Bloody Valentine..."

"All our big influences come from England," says Lu. "We always wanted to come here. Even before. It's like a dream."

Back in the studio the drums are being engineered. The same beat (seemingly) has been played back for hours while Tim and the

sound engineer listen intently. Mario lies sprawled across the sofa with his head over the edge, furiously air drumming. Sometimes when Tim gets enthusiastic about a certain bit in the track he and Mario air drum in time, even though neither one is facing the other. It's hard to imagine that in 1998 Wry were watching Ash at the reading festival with thousands of others.

"I just think the songs are really good," says Tim when asked what he likes about Wry. "I think they're really interesting, and great to watch. I suppose they're just a mix of a lot of my favourite bands as well."

Tim might be better known for his song writing than his producing, but as points out, he's had plenty of experience with both. "I've had ten years of working in studios, so I've picked up so many tricks. I've worked with so many great producers, sort of been watching the whole time and learning, and over the years I've just gone 'shit', you know? I could do this."

He got involved with Wry when a friend gave him their single.

"It probably took me about three months before I actually listened to it, because I get given loads of CD's, but I was driving in my car one day and I thought I'll check this out. I thought it sounded

really exciting; it's a really good song. So that played on my mind, then I think they got the message saying I really liked it and then somehow the idea came up to get in the studio together."

What strikes you most about this band is how much more experienced they are than any other of the up and comings on the scene. They talk animatedly about their adventures - getting stranded in the desert on tour, run ins with the police, motels with mirrored ceilings and all night

homecoming parties. Wry have the kind of history you read about in veteran rock biographies. So was it hard going from a place where they had huge success to being virtually unknown?

"Yeah," he says without hesitation. "It's hard. For me, it's hard. I think for me it's harder than for them," he says, indicating the rest of the band. "I think they don't mind."

Is he the typical, attention craving front man?

"Yeah. I miss it a lot," he says. "That's why we have to go on tour in Brazil in November because I'm missing the people screaming!" he laughs.

Pointing out that having attention from the A-listers that have volunteered their (free) production services might bring them closer to getting signed over here, Lu shrugs.

"We think of it like this now. It doesn't really matter. If we get signed it's great. But we're confident we can do it ourselves, you know?"

It's this kind of optimism and determination which characterises the band. For example, when Mario talks about the meaning of their new song 'Come and Fall'.

"It's like when you struggle to get something and we suffer," he says "but then behind the clouds lights to be found and all that. We have fun and we love it here even though we have to do other kinds of jobs."

So Wry might not mean much here yet, but when it means something to Gordon Raphael and Tim Wheeler and even Chris bloody Martin, to MTV Brazil and thousands of South American fans, and when they sound as good as this, we'll emphasise yet.

"But you can see us on MTV Brazil,"