

Apples in Stereo by Violet Vandever

It had only been about a week since The Apples in Stereo started traveling to promote their latest album, *New Magnetic Wonder*, but they had already rocked a sold-out show at the Bowery Ballroom and a Conan O'Brien taping. The day I spoke to them, they were heading off to the next stop on their North American tour.

In 1993, The Apples came together in Denver, Colorado to meet a music scene that was dominated by garage and punk rock; the optimistic Apples were sort of an anomaly. Eric Allen, their long-standing bassist, worked with the band's original drummer at a record shop, where he picked up a copy of their CD one day. " [Schneider, the band's founder] was a friend of mine, we ran around with the same people. I played the guitar; he needed a bassist and asked me if I could play. 'Yeah, I can play,' I said, totally bullshitting, and he gave me a shot. It took me a while to wrap my mind around playing the bass. I looked at it as some sort of mutated guitar."

The Apples, with Allen in tow, went on to record eight full-length albums and EPs with SpinART records, including the 2001 *Let's Go!* EP for the Powerpuff Girls. Their ten-year contract with SpinART was set to expire several years ago and they were shopping around for another label when Elijah Wood introduced himself at the 2005 South by Southwest festival. Allen recalls, "He just came up to us one day after a show and said, 'Hey, I'm Elijah, I'm a really big fan, I have all your records.' We kept in touch for a while; it was perfect timing. Elijah's a great guy. We couldn't have asked for a better publicist."

The rest of the Apples are Robert Schneider, John Hill, Bill Doss, John Dufilho and John Ferguson; they live in Denver, Lexington, Dallas, and Athens, Georgia, respectively. When asked when they possibly have time to create and do their thing, Allen explains, "We have to plan it really well. We usually get together and work on stuff and then do a little tour, even if it's a short tour after that." The band needs a moment to confer on the origin of the new album's title. Schneider remembers, "Uh uh uh, I got it off, uh, packaging of a magnetic science toy for children...it seemed like an awkward translation into English from some other language."

Apples in Stereo have managed a steady stream of success throughout their nearly two-decade career. While the band has a very poppy, upbeat sound that is more Beach Boys than Bright Eyes, they are still unarguably "indie." Allen says, "We're indie rock in that we're not on a major label or selling millions of records. In a climate where major label culture rules, you gotta do it on your own."

When asked about the lighthearted nature of their new album, Allen responds with, "I think we have a pretty positive feel. It's a pretty hideous world we live in and it's good to have something that makes you feel good when you hear it. We're just trying to make the best records possible."

Check out Apples in Stereo and their new album at <http://www.applesinstereo.com>