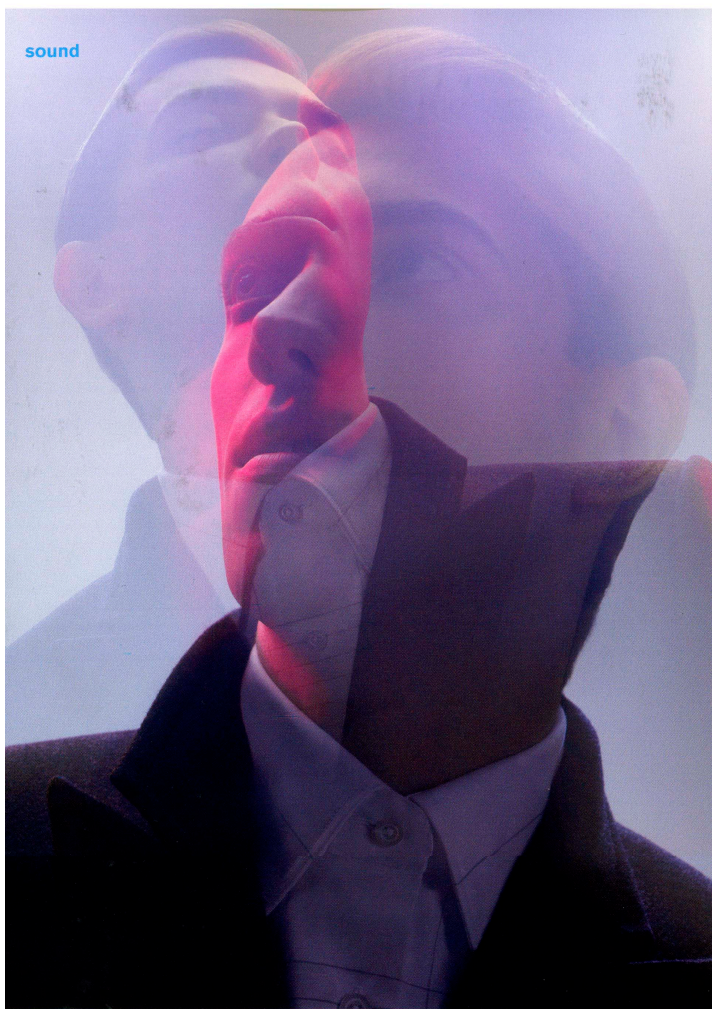




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NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

ASHER LACK, WHO HELMS THE INDIE BAND RAVENS & CHIMES, CAN'T HELP BUT SEE HIS HOMETOWN REFLECTED IN HIS SONGS

Since forming in 2005, New York band Ravens & Chimes has experienced the kind of random good luck that most up-and-coming acts would trade their favorite Gibson Les Paul for. After recording two songs under the moniker of Lost at Sea on a lark, the group of friends drew the unexpected attention of College Music Journal, which promptly invited them to play the CMJ Music Marathon in NYC. A few more shows and assorted lineup changes later, the band snagged a record deal after passing along a demo tape at a party—all of which took place less than a year after originally forming. Led by 24-year-old musical

impresario Asher Lack, the six-piece band (including Brittany Anjou on piano, Abe Pollack on bass, Avery Brooks on synths, and vocalist/flautist Nora Kelleher) eschews the fuzzy garage rock and art-school folkery so popular with the current crop of NYC buzz bands in favor of heavily-layered indie pop. Big, bright, and woozily romantic, the music is littered with the kinds of orchestral flourishes and subtle literary references sure to warm the heart of any Arcade Fire or Decemberists enthusiast looking for something new to tug on their heartstrings. On its sparkling debut, *Reichenbach Falls*, the band saunters through an elegantly arranged collection of songs that take on everything from growing up to growing apart in the big, bad city. **T. Cole Rachel**

T. COLE RACHEL Your band is kind of an unlikely success story.

ASHER LACK It really is. I feel like everyone who is in this band now is only in it because I happened to run into them on the street. There wasn't anything very premeditated about it, just me saying "Hey, do you want to join a band?" and them saying, "Hell, yeah!" It was my senior year of college and I was finishing a screenwriting degree at NYU film school. I didn't expect the band thing to really happen like it did. I feel like fortune has really smiled on us.

TCR How did you arrive at the band's aesthetic?

AL I'm so sick of total "dude" bands—you know, five dudes with a bunch of guitars or whatever. I didn't want the record to feel too masculine. I really wanted there to be a balance to the record. Most of the people in Ravens & Chimes were serious music-school students, so everyone contributed various musical interludes that occur throughout the record. We're also mixing things

like harmonium and glockenspiel and flute in with piano and more traditional "rock" elements. So, the sound is pretty diverse in the end. It's very much defined by all the various members and the chemistry of us playing together...it wasn't something that I necessarily dictated or anything.

TCR New York features very prominently on this record. Are you from here originally?

AL Yeah. My parents are both Canadian, but they lived here in NYC until my freshman year of college. They live upstate now, but I still live in the East Village. My father is a painter and my mother is a writer and a filmmaker, so they are very supportive of my creative endeavors. I lived in Chinatown as a kid, then later in Soho. New York is very much a part of my creative process and a big inspiration.

TCR New York is such a classically romantic place to write about. The city is almost always a great backdrop for any story you might want to tell.

AL Definitely, and it's crazy how much the city has changed. I grew up on Grand Street between Wooster and West Broadway. As a kid I wasn't allowed to walk down Wooster at night because it was full of empty buildings and crackheads. Then, at some point, I'm walking down Wooster and seeing people like Claire Danes walking around. When did that happen? It's like, how did everything change so much without me really noticing? That's kind of what this whole record is about. I grew up here, so I couldn't help but make all these parallels between the way I've grown up and changed over the years and the ways that the city has too.

TCR Did you grow up in a pretty musical household?

AL My dad loves Ray Charles and my mom was really into Donovan and psychedelic music. Though she told me recently that when I was a little kid I would come visit her at the vintage shop where she worked and always request that they play the Smiths. Even at a young age I loved dramatic, romantic music. As a 5-year-old I was heavily influenced by the electronic drumming in New Order.

TCR Is everyone in the band prepared to ditch the day job and hit the road now?

AL Well, we just came back from our first real stint of touring and it was very interesting. It was all six of us, our gear, plus the head of our record label, all stuffed into a big suburban. Not even a van, dude! We had a good time, but I found that the key to making sure everything was cool was just to make sure that everyone was fed. Hunger causes major strife. That's when people fight.

TCR There are some very sly literary references on the record. Where did the title, *Reichenbach Falls*, come from?

AL I love things from the 19th century and I love old books. I'm particularly fond of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes character. That's where that title comes from. When Arthur Conan Doyle was tired of writing about Sherlock Holmes he decided that the character would fall to his death over Reichenbach Falls while fighting his nemesis. Three years later, Doyle realized that he had no other choice than to bring Holmes back and did so by explaining that Holmes had faked his own death. I thought the image of the falls perfectly represented the idea of basically being bound to the thing that you make. No matter how much you change or want to change, you can never really abandon who you are or what you do.

TCR Like, you can throw something over the falls but eventually—in some form—it's going to come back?

AL It's more like...I basically wrote the songs on this record over the course of six years. The person I was when I started the record is definitely not the person I am now. I like that idea that sometimes you have to kill off some old part of yourself in order to get to the new, better version. Or something like that.

Ravens & Chimes' Asher Lack in NYC, June 2007

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Jacket **TSE** Shirt **Jil Sander**

Reichenbach Falls is out in October 2007 from

Grey Rock Records/Better Looking Records.

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