

Stepping out of comfort zones

Musicians Gentle Bones and Myrne head off in new creative directions together in an electronic album

Eddino Abdul Hadi
Music Correspondent

Almost two years after he released his last EP and sold out two nights at the Esplanade Concert Hall, home-grown singer-songwriter Gentle Bones is back with new music.

Instead of a solo effort, the new album of EDM (electronic dance music) tunes is a collaboration with local electronic act Myrne.

B4NGER PROJECT was released last Friday and the two will perform the songs together live for the first time at The Pavilion @ Far East Square on April 27.

Both Gentle Bones, whose real name is Joel Tan, and DJ-producer Myrne, whose real name is Manfred Lim, say that working together allowed them to step outside their comfort zones and move in new creative directions.

Tan, 24, was particularly enthusiastic about working with Lim, 22, whom he describes as "the best producer from Singapore".

Lim made headlines in 2015 when he signed on with American DJ Diplo's Mad Decent record label. The Singapore Management University student does regular gigs in the United States, including last month's Ultra Music Festival in Miami, one of the biggest dance music festivals in the world.

Tan says: "I feel like the sound we created is largely unheard of. Even while we were creating it, we didn't know what we were going for, the songs just came out in a natural way."

"One thing for sure, we wanted to deviate from what we were always used to, and are familiar with, and that was our common ground."

Lim says that working with Tan allowed him to stretch his musical boundaries. "A lot of the main ideology in EDM is to stick to your sound, stick to your own formula, so I'm really glad this thing happened."

They are no strangers to each other's work. In 2013, Lim was so enamoured with Tan's debut single, *Until We Die*, that he remixed it.

Says Lim: "For me, it was just different from other Singapore music that was coming out at that time."

"His music had a familiar pop, folk, indie sound, but his voice was totally different. He had a unique voice and I thought it would be super interesting if we tried to juxtapose that kind of vocal in an electronic space."

Tan turned to Lim for advice when he was working on his electronic-tinged sophomore EP, *Geniuses & Thieves* (2016).

In March last year, they decided to work on new music together and started spending three days a week laying down tracks in Lim's usual working space - his bedroom in his family's Balestier apartment.

They hit it off immediately. Says Lim: "On the first day, we wrote four songs."

The first song that was completed, *IUIY*, was released last July. They followed it up with *B4NGER* in November.

All of the song titles are stylised with numbers. The third song in the album, for example, is titled *S3OUL*, while the 10th and last song, which features vocals from home-grown R&B singer-songwriter Sam Rui, is titled *V0DKA*.

Lim explains that the songs started out as beats and instrumentals. "We called the songs Project 1, 2 and so on, and then we got attached to the numbers." Tan would then write "99 per cent" of the lyrics.

At the upcoming gig, singer-songwriter Linying will also perform and Lim will end the show with a DJ set. He says: "It's a culmination of all the work we've put into the album in the past year."

Tan interjects: "It's going to be a celebration."

dinohadi@sph.com.sg



BOOK IT / THE B4NGER PROJECT SHOW
WHERE: The Pavilion @ Far East Square, 01-01, 28 China Street
WHEN: April 27, 8pm
ADMISSION: \$45 from Apaceix, go to www.apacix.com; \$55 at the door

Singer-songwriter Gentle Bones (right) and DJ-producer Myrne worked on their new album in Myrne's Balestier apartment.
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