

PLEASURE CIRCUIT

Interviewed by The Silver Age, July 9th, 2024

Pleasure Circuit is the Philadelphia-based musical collaboration of Sam and Ash, half of A Night of Arrogance.¹ They have recently broken into the scene with an industrial sound and goth influences, playing their first show on June 27th, 2024. They are currently recording their first EP, which will be released soon. For band updates and show information, follow @pleasurecircuit on Instagram.

ALICIA LOPEZ: Okay, so really basic info. I know your Instagram and I know y'all link to a Bandcamp. Do you have any other social media you want us to tag or link or anything like that?

SAM: I don't think we have anything else for this one.

ASH: I mean, I could plug my Twitter, but that's just personal things. So I'm not going to plug that.

A.L.: Okay, so then name, age, where you're based and what instrument you play in the band, if you want to just go one at a time?

SAM: I'm Sam, I'm 23, based in North Philly. I'm keys and programming for the band if that makes sense... various objects...

ASH: concepts...

SAM: ideas.

ASH: I'm Ash, I'm 22, I'm also based out of North Philly, and I play guitar and I sing. I also help with programming as far as just getting ideas, but [gesturing to Sam] this is the Ableton guy. They call him "the Ableton asshole."

A.L.: Awesome. So what type of music would you say you play genre-wise?

SAM: Industrial, as like a branching term.

ASH: Dubby industrial, I guess.

¹ ig: @anightofarrogance

SAM: We're Britpop, obviously. Scratch that.

ASH: Yeah, we're a Britpop band. It's a Britpop Summer.

A.L.: Name origin?

ASH: Well, I came up with the name probably 10 years ago. It's been a while. It's something to do with the literal circuits of things in the brain that activate the pleasure centers of the brain or whatever. But I have no real idea where I came up with it. I think it's just that it sounds really cool.

SAM: A notes app classic.

ASH: [agreeing] It's a notes app classic.

A.L.: Awesome. How did you two meet?

ASH: You want to tell it, or should I tell it?

SAM: I think you should tell it.

ASH: It's kind of insane. So about five years ago, I want to say, I was actually in a car crash in Philly. And it was fine – no one got hurt. But I was trapped under a door, and Sam was able to pull me out. He was just right there when it happened. So, I was like, "Yo, thanks for saving my life. What's your Instagram?" And Sam gave me his Instagram. And I mean, that was that. We just kind of didn't talk for a while. Then I came to Temple. And so, we met there, and we saw each other across the street. And – get this – a car crash happened right between us as we were walking by each other. And we both looked to the side – it's fucking crazy – we looked to the side of the road, and, again, no one was hurt, thankfully. It was just like a fender bender. But we were like, "Hey, it's you." So we just decided, all right, well –

SAM: I guess we should hang out.

ASH: I think it's fate. So here we are now. And we realized we both make music. And here we are.

A.L.: That's insane.

MICHAEL AUBLE: It's pretty insane.

A.L.: So how long have you guys each been playing music individually and then together?

ASH: I don't know. I fielded the last one. So that's yours.

SAM: I mean individually, I feel like I've been kind of fucking around with music for most of my life, but I think *seriously* playing music like this was something I wanted to do probably, like eight years now, probably, seven or eight years. We've been playing together for, I think, a little over a year now.

ASH: Yeah, that sounds right. It kind of only formed as Pleasure Circuit proper then. Pleasure Circuit became a thing probably in the past year. I've been playing music personally for, I want to say, 12 years. I got my first guitar then, and I've always sang, so... that's a much more boring answer than the last one, I'm sure.

A.L.: That's awesome.

ASH: Yeah, I think I've been playing seriously for around the same time again since, like, Temple.

A.L.: Are you guys self-taught or musically trained?

ASH: I took guitar lessons and stuff. I'm self-taught in how to sing though. And given that – I'm trying not to brag by saying this, but people have said they like my voice, so something is going on correctly.

SAM: I'm self-taught. I took piano lessons when I was a little kid, but like pretty much everything that I do *now* for music I'm self-taught with – Ableton and drums and synths and all that good stuff.

ASH: Magic.

SAM: Yeah, the magic sauce.

A.L.: Nice. So you all go to Temple? Went to Temple?

SAM: I go to Temple currently.

ASH: I graduated just – in June? May? Whichever one you want to say was the graduation.

A.L.: Did you guys major in music or something else?

ASH: We're actually both film students.

M.A.: Oh, cool

A.L.: That's good. We enjoy film, although we don't study it officially.

M.A.: Yes, yes, exactly.

COLE GABORIAULT: We're all film enjoyers here.

A.L.: Musical influences for each of you individually and for your group?

ASH: For our group, probably Nine Inch Nails is the big one for the two of us. A lot of goth stuff.

SAM: Bauhaus.

ASH: Yeah, Bauhaus, The Cure, stuff like that.

SAM: Definitely more kind of classic industrial too, like Throbbing Gristle I know is a big one.

ASH: Sam, you can take the individual one first.

SAM: Well, for myself personally and for this project especially, anything that came out of that late 2000s Blogspot scene, like Sun Araw and LA Vampires and all that stuff. Those are definitely big on this project.

ASH: I guess the main influences that I take are 2000s and '90s post hardcore. MCR is my favorite band, but I fuck with like Fugazi and Alexisonfire and Glassjaw and all that shit. Also a lot of noise rock, which definitely seeps into this. I'm a big Sonic Youth fan. There's a lot of Sonic Youth. Yeah, that's one for both of us.

SAM: Yeah.

A.L.: What does your music writing process look like?

SAM: I feel like even more so than other bands I've been in – we're not like a jam band by any means, but it's definitely more jam-oriented. It's just sort of, plug everything in and start going.

ASH: Yeah. Our first set that we did, two of the songs were basically just like ideas that we had for a while. And we were just like, alright, well, this sounds really cool. So, let's just kind of jam on that for a while and play around with that. And it came out pretty well, I think. So I think that's kind of where the dub influence comes in. We almost play it by ear, so to speak.

SAM: Yeah. We find like two minutes of it that sound cool.

ASH: Yeah, exactly. Other times it's more straightforward. Like one of us has a hook that we come up with, and we just kind of write around that. But a lot of what we've written so far has been based on jamming around and figuring it out.

A.L.: Do you want to just go through the other bands that you all are in real quick?

SAM: That's a long list.

ASH: There's like a lot.

SAM: Yeah, do you want to go first or... I mean, there's crossover.

ASH: There's crossover. We're in another band together. We're both in A Night of Arrogance, but that's kind of it for what we're sharing. Besides that I'm not really in anything else specifically. I've been trying to get a hardcore thing off the ground, but that's not happening anytime soon.

SAM: I'm also in A Night of Arrogance. I'm in Maxx Power and the Children of God.

ASH: Allegedly.

SAM: People have said I'm in that band. I black out every time, so I'm not sure. And then I'm also in – I have like a sort of electroacoustic experimental thing called Gen/Loss right now. And then I also have like 300 different solo projects that I won't list because it would take too long.

ASH: I mean, I think you could probably plug Etox.

SAM: Yeah, Etox. I'm also in a glitch band called Custom Drum Destroyer. And is that – is that all of them? I think I got all of them.

ASH: I think currently, yeah.

A.L.: How do you guys approach writing lyrics?

ASH: I'm the only lyricist of the band, at least right now. And it's pretty much just – we come up with songs, and then sometimes I figure out a melody ahead of time, or I write accordingly. But I have a really long notes app compilation – it's like six different notes completely full on my phone. I'm on my sixth one right now, and it's already really long. It's like poetry and things that I find inspiring, things that I've written myself and just other ideas like that. So sometimes I try to retrofit whatever I write there into a melody that works, which is not easy.

But when it comes together, I think it rocks. That's my process for writing there. It's the same for any of my projects really.

A.L.: What themes do you guys explore in your writing?

ASH: I guess, lyrically, the idea I had for a while was that *Pleasure Circuit* is almost like a role-playing thing for me, where I play a character who's a dogshit person, just actively awful. That's not necessarily fallen to the wayside, but given that we only have two songs with set-in lyrics and only one of them follows that, I think I'm going to have to try and hammer that in a little bit more. So we'll see. But other than that, I mean, it's generally just like unhappy stuff. You know the deal.

A.L.: So, you guys are both in *A Night of Arrogance*. What are you trying to do here that you're not trying to do there?

SAM: I mean, it's definitely a more electronic project than *A Night of Arrogance*. *A Night of Arrogance* is very straightforward, like guitar, bass, drums.

ASH: Yeah. Noise rock.

SAM: This one was sort of just an outlet for us to get weirder and try a lot of new sonic textures and stuff.

A.L.: What are you working on now?

SAM: We're trying to get the album out pretty soon. We've started recording. I think we were probably going EP first, just so that we have something out there in the world.

ASH: It's just to prove our existence.

SAM: Yeah. So if you Google us, something comes up. We're working towards an album. We work pretty fast.

ASH: Yeah, especially compared to *A Night of Arrogance*, which has taken like three years to make an album.

SAM: Yeah. I think probably because of how much weirder this project is and how much more improvisational it is. I think we can bang out new material a lot faster.

A.L.: Why are you a musician?

ASH: I mean, for me, it's because it's like the only thing I'm good at, and I fucked up, and this is all I got.

SAM: I feel similar, but I also just, I don't know. There are other art forms that I like to work in, but music is probably my primary one, just because I feel like it's so versatile. You can conjure so much with so little in music. It can be so minimalistic and still have two works that are so fundamentally different from each other in such different worlds. I love making little worlds to play around in. It's probably why I have so many projects.

A.L.: What other art forms do you work in?

SAM: We both do film.

ASH: Yeah, we're both pretty visual artists as well.

SAM: Yeah, I do a lot of video art and digital glitch art. I'm very computer based, unfortunately. Always on that damn phone.

ASH: I paint a lot. Yeah, film, writing, painting for me. Video art for him. There's definitely a lot of overlap in our sensibilities as well.

M.A.: Any, any film inspirations? Any favorite filmmakers?

ASH: David Lynch for me.

A.L.: You're in the right city for that.

ASH: I've been re-watching Twin Peaks, and I've been showing it to one of my childhood friends. It's really fun to have a fresh set of eyes seeing this kind of vague, impressionist story, especially by Fire Walk with Me and Season 3, and just come to realizations that you never had before about the story. I think that's kind of something that in a vague way translates into the way we make music.

SAM: I also feel like – within our music, but – I know it's a shared love of like, Gregg Araki and Jon Moritsugu and sort of '90s new queer stuff.

ASH: Yeah. Transgressive art. John Waters.