

CULTURE WARS

Alex Dugan - vocals, electronics

Mic Vredenburg - guitar, electronics

David Grayson - drums

Leather clad Austin rockers Culture Wars hate wasting time. The trio's first Alan Moulder-blessed single Money (Gimmie, Gimmie) has "come blazing out of the gate with an addictive electro-rock sound and swagger" according to PopMatters. Their five-song debut Culture Wars EP is pure adrenaline with production by longtime collaborator Robert Sewell and mixing by Manny Marroquin (Kanye West, Imagine Dragons) and Alan Moulder (The Killers, Nine Inch Nails). The debut release soundly and quickly establishes Culture Wars as a band with their own unique style and vibe. Merging edgy, infectious song craft with inventive electronic textures, punchy guitar work, insistent melodic hooks and the commanding vocals of charismatic front man Alex Dugan, the band makes vibrant, bracing music that's sonically adventurous yet effortlessly accessible.

The band pulls their music directly from their environment, writing and recording both from home on laptops and in the remote setting of Sonic Ranch, located just 45 minutes toward the border outside of El Paso, TX. Dugan remembers, "It was 3am at the studio just outside of El Paso, and all of us were drinking Russian vodka chased with a bite of pickles. Mic was finishing overdubs on a different song when all of a sudden, this super random feedback noise began happening through the Vox amp. I immediately jumped up and begged Rob to start recording the feedback on a new track. It was then that we cut the entire song that night, which would later be titled "Money". It wasn't until noon the next day, when we awoke, that we realized what we had recorded."

Culture Wars' unique working methods draw upon the members' potent creative chemistry, while taking advantage of the technical options offered by the accessibility of digital technology. "We write the heart of every song using a couple of synthesizers just to get chords and melody. We're not really technical guys. I still don't know how to work half of these things; I'm basically just turning knobs until it makes a noise that I like," Dugan explains. "We're creating most of this on our laptops. A lot of our tracks have the appearance of a rock song, but underneath there's all sorts of weird

experimental shit going on. Like, we'll strike a match and record that sound, and put it through a reverb plug-in, and stick it underneath a track so it sounds like a percussion instrument. Or we'll record the sound of the rain outside on our iPhones, and we'll put some reverb and delay on that, and use it as a texture." The band's no-rules approach to song writing and recording has been the key factor in developing their unique sound alongside their producer and close friend Robert Sewell.

Lyrics like "inflated egos, irritating sense of entitlement" and "head in my hole, can't you see that I'm not home?" point to something bigger for this band. While they enjoy concocting rock music for the radio world, they're not content with just doing that and they have a hard time hiding their true feelings. "We were both coming out of painful breakups and were reaching the end of another one of our practices that really ended up becoming more of just a therapy session. We decided to try out something one last time to get the emotions out sonically. Mic started to play a progression on the Sub-Phatty, and I started to sing, 'You keep on lying. I don't want to know. I don't want to stay.' At that point we both looked at each other and it all made sense. Everything we'd been working towards, everything we wanted. It was all right there. The band, the emotions, whatever they were, it didn't matter when we were playing. Whatever was bothering us quickly disappeared."

This mentality was solidified when coming to the task of naming the band. "If anything, it's an anti-statement," Dugan remarked. "We just want to make music. While I may have thought of the name on complete accident, it all suddenly connected and made sense at that time. There's enough anger and bullshit out there. We just want everyone to drop it all for a couple of minutes and agree on some chords."

"We've all been in other bands where we tried so hard to be this or that," says Dugan. "But in this band, all we have to do is be ourselves. When we're having fun and not really trying is when we come up with our best stuff. The three of us spent so much time in other bands trying to make something happen, but in this band things just seem to happen without us having to push it. It's been kind of a big adjustment to have so many great people caring about what we're doing, because we've all been in so many bands where nobody cared. It's a lot more enjoyable this way."

With the band working closely with producer Sewell, and in-demand mixers Moulder and Marroquin on board, Culture Wars benefits from an uncommonly talented creative team. The band's rock, electronic, and rap/hip-hop elements point to their overall diversity as people, and have helped them develop the distinctive and widely accessible sound they are taking to a wider audience.