



MAGNETIC ISLAND
OUT AT SEA
 (Disregard Records)

Release date: September 21, 2010

*press materials can be found at
fourpawsmedia.com/magneticisland

Track List:

Side A - Loud:
 End In Bender
 Sung (Not Said)

Side B - Quiet:
 Summer Phase
 Let It Lie
 Summer Phase (Alternate Mix)*

*tape release-only



Contact:

Marisa Handren
 four paws media

(908) 310-1821
pumpkin@fourpawsmedia.com
www.fourpawsmedia.com
 AIM: MarisaMagik

Bookended by singing that sounds like a choir and guitar that sounds like church bells, “End in Bender” sets the tone for Out at Sea. It’s wintry yet warm, sweeping yet disarmingly personal—and only five minutes long. It is quintessential Magnetic Island.

A year ago, Magnetic Island was just the name of a mountainous spot where Aussies liked to holiday. As for Brooklyn duo Renminbi? It had just released its most ambitious record yet, the Don Fleming-helmed EP Surface.

The island’s name hasn’t changed. But after Surface, Renminbi guitarist Lisa Liu and keyboardist SMV started to rethink their approach to their music. Wanting to explode their band’s identity and to explore new sounds, they settled on a new name: Magnetic Island.

“After seven years as Renminbi, we’d fulfilled our vision as that band. If we were going to keep challenging ourselves, we’d have to start over,” said SMV. She and Liu called on guitarist TJ Richards and drummer/singer Nikkie McLeod. The four began toying with instrumental textures and vocal harmonies they never had before.

Together they recorded two singles: a piano-driven cover of “A Dream,” Lou Reed and John Cale’s tribute to their late friend Andy Warhol, and “Subterfuge,” the group’s own elegy to Liu’s late friend and former bandmate Joe Graziano. With its fervent singing, steel pan and samples of Graziano’s voice, the song brims with a rough-hewn energy that recalls the Arcade Fire and Thalia Zedek.

Out at Sea, due out digitally and on cassette tape September 21, pushes that intuitive approach further—even though Liu and SMV wrote most of it before Magnetic Island came to be, and even though they reconvened with longtime Renminbi drummer Jenny Johnson to record it. According to Liu, “Jenny’s move to Boston after Surface helped us remake our dynamic as a trio, and like us, she had ended up in a really different place musically.”

That helped keep the trio from behaving as Renminbi. So did its decision to print their digital recordings to tape, inspired by erstwhile collaborator Richards. “Tape is its own instrument; it’s much warmer and messier than digital,” he explained.

The sound serves Magnetic Island’s new approach ideally on Out at Sea. “End in Bender” has the purposeful, nostalgic timbre of a good Walkmen tune, and “Sung (Not Said)” shifts from chilly Radiohead riff to My Bloody Valentine lullaby to LiLiPUT-style prickle. The ambling slide guitar on “Summer Phase” recalls Neil Young, the laconic vocals young Liz Phair, before the song bursts into one of the band’s trademark post-punk crescendos.

But for all the unexpected arrangements on Out at Sea, its songs sound even sparer. Although the Graziano-dedicated “Let It Lie” shares influences (like Versus and the Spinanes) with some Renminbi songs, it also betrays a startling frankness that Renminbi rarely matched.

With its freer band dynamic and no implicit codes of who plays what, Magnetic Island has made an EP that, as SMV said, it needed to start over in order to make. Each side of its tape points in an alternate musical direction Magnetic Island might choose, were it a more conventional band. Out at Sea needs no such compass. —*Sam Schulz*

Upcoming Performances:

aug 14 - Boston, MA - O'Brien's Pub (w/ Quilty)
 sep 16 - New York, NY - Piano's (EP Release Show!)