



## BIOROCK SWARMTRIBES ALLOWS FANS IN ON THE BAND BUZZ

For any self-respecting music fan, there's nothing quite like the thrill of discovery, of being the first to unearth a new act or nugget of band news. In an age of information excess, it can often seem impossible to get through the guff and reach the gold. AU aside, for many of us personal recommendation and word of mouth remains the most persuasive and trusted means of finding out about music. However, SwarmTribes, a new form of communicating band information and building buzz based on scientific principles, could benefit both fans and artists alike.

Drawing on the theory of organizational biomimetics (aka bioteams) – the process by which information is disseminated in nature – SwarmTribes allows bands to grow a committed fanbase via mobile and online messaging. The premise is simple: the bands and labels interact directly with a core team of the act's biggest fans. Each of these 'Alpha Fans' in turn communicates with their own 'swarm' of other fans and so on and so on like the ripples of the proverbial pebble dropped in the ocean. It's a mutually beneficial deal too, as fans receive access to privileged and early information on everything from gigs to releases.

Ken Thompson, SwarmTribes founder elaborates: "Yes, it is a bit counter-intuitive – to build up a really big fan base you need to create a very small group of passionate supporters who are equipped and motivated to create the big fan base for you. You just have to look at the history of major religious and political movements to see how well this works!"

Perhaps those who stand to gain most from SwarmTribes are unsigned acts. The music industry is in a state of flux the likes of which we haven't seen since Elvis Presley first thrust his hips in an unmistakably suggestive manner back in the Fifties. With a legal to illegal record ratio of 1 to 40, the major labels and indie brethren alike are taking a battering. In this climate, the majors are increasingly focused on exploiting and licensing their existing recordings rather than risking investment in new talent. All told, it's never been tougher to make the transition from hopeful to fully-fledged music star.

However, by using SwarmTribes bands can bolster their chances by recruiting a fanbase and thereby increase the buzz around them. It might not appeal to the romantic who believes that talent will always win through, but in the tougher than ever reality of today's industry, SwarmTribes might just provide that crucial advantage.

What's more, SwarmTribes is not just about bands – anything that attracts fans can use it, be it a music venue, dance club or big music festival. So in the spirit of investigative journalism we are testing SwarmTribes out here in AU Magazine to see how it works with our AU Mobile Army. You too can get involved. SwarmTribes already has 80 UK indie bands signed up for the system for free thanks to the sponsorship of NESTA (The National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts) and can continue to give out free licenses (including up to 25,000 free texts) for suitable acts till the end of the year.

"Most of our bands are London-based," said Ken. "As a native of Belfast I would dearly love to see more local bands, venues or promoters taking advantage of the NESTA scheme before it runs out." *FJ*

FIND OUT MORE AT [WWW.SWARMTRIBES.COM](http://WWW.SWARMTRIBES.COM)

More comedy action comes Belfast way in the shape of hip-swalling dandy **Russell Brand**. Fresh from scandalising uptight America with a typically provocative performance at the MTV Video Music Awards, the laugh inducing lothario has announced a number of UK dates including a performance at The Waterfront Comedy Club, in Jan 2009.



Everyone's favourite Scottish art-pop ensemble (excepting Orange Juice), **Franz Ferdinand**, have announced that they have at last completed work on their third album. What's more, they've gone all dancey on us. Well, when we say 'all' we mean there are some beats and blips. Here's what top fop Alex Kapranos had to say, "The last record was fast, furious, frantic, 150 beats per minute. It was like a teenager having sex. This one's a bit more assured and a bit friendlier for the dancefloor. It's about 104/105bpm." There you go, 104 to 105 bpm, our favourite.



Fastfude's very own Feline1, aka David Davis, has revealed details of his latest musical incarnation. Fans of the Eighties synth mania of Davis' previous incarnation **The Feline Dream** will be horrified by his admission that new venture **Hollow Moon** "doesn't sound the least bit Eighties". Instead, their debut album *Closer Than The Blood* contains an abundance of bruising guitar-led compositions in the vein of Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds. A full review will appear in a future AU.

More cowbell! Yes, that sound can only mean **The Rapture** are near. The post-punk dance-funk New Yorkers are due to release a DJ Kicks mix album entitled *Tapes* on October 20. Containing cuts from everyone from Richie Havens to Ghostface Killah, the album speaks of the band's wildly eclectic tastes.



## IT'S ALL GONE PETE TONG (IN A GOOD WAY)

JAPANESE POPSTARS RECEIVE PATRONAGE  
OF DANCE MUSIC'S GODFATHER

The last six months have been somewhat surreal for Northern Irish dance maestros Japanese Popstars. In that time, the Derry trio have played some of the most prestigious festivals on the circuit and had their debut album, the frankly rather awesome *We Just Are*, acclaimed by all and sundry. Talent and temerity have taken the lads a long way but they've also been boosted by the support of a certain Mr Pete Tong.

"We've been extremely lucky to receive the blessing of Pete," confirms Decky Hedrock (Declan McLaughlin). "It's helped us secure festival slots and remix work. Millions of people listen to his show and for him to take a shine to what we're doing is fantastic. He's been playing our stuff, posting about us and looking to book us to play the same festivals as him."

The festival season has been kind to the Popstars, the past summer seeing them wow audiences at legendary events such as Glastonbury and O2 Wireless. For Decky and bandmates Gary Curran and Galo (Gareth Donoghue), the latter proved especially memorable.

"It was mind-blowing the sheer number of people who came to see us. We were on around 4pm and at the start there were about 15, maybe 20, people watching. By the end of the first song there were around 500 and by the end of the set 5,000. That was a highlight for us."

However, it was closer to home, at Oxegen, that the band scored a particularly high-profile hook-up when they bagged themselves remix duties on The Ting Tings' 'Be The One'.

"We just harassed them at Oxegen," admits Decky. "We were walking past them backstage and decided to tell them that we'd seen the show and thought they were great. We told them we'd love to do a remix if they were ever up for it. Katie [White] said to give them a shout about it. I emailed her the next day and said basically, 'What's the craic?'. A few days later, Sony contacted us to say that The Ting Tings had checked us out and really wanted us to do a remix."

The band are much sought after in that field – they've also collaborated with the likes of Grand National and Groove Armada – but at the moment they are concentrating on writing material for the follow-up to their debut album.

We're actually in the studio trying to record album number two at the minute," Decky informs us. "The label have been reasonably happy with album sales for *We Just Are* and we'll be looking to build it up further next year with the release of the second album."

With luminous reviews appearing both in dance publications such as *Mixmag* and *DJ Mag* and more mainstream titles such as *The Guardian* and *The Word* ("literally amazing", was their verdict), there is every possibility that come 2009, the new album could see the Japanese Popstars become a crossover dance success to rival Justice or Simian Mobile Disco.

"We're really happy for anyone to like the music, be they dance fans or otherwise," states Decky. "It's crazy to be featured in magazines that you read growing up. It's difficult to take in; it's all a different level of success to anything we could ever have expected. This is everything we've ever wanted – right now we're living the dream." *FJ*

**WE JUST ARE IS AVAILABLE NOW ON GUNG-HO! RECORDINGS**

[WWW.MYSPACE.COM/THEJAPANESEPOPSTARS](http://WWW.MYSPACE.COM/THEJAPANESEPOPSTARS)