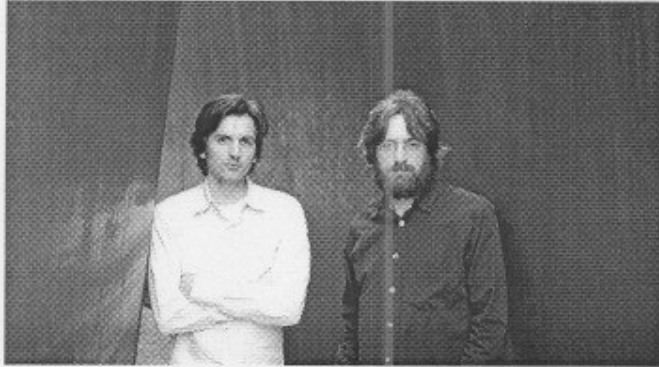


The New Year takes its time getting here



Heather Whinna

But the wait may be worth it. The indie band rings in its third album in nine years tonight at the Echo.

By Scott Timberg, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
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On the long list of indie bands that deserve wider hearing -- Quasi, the Ladybug Transistor, the Clientele -- sits the New Year, a mild-mannered group whose songs begin as reflective, melancholy odes and transform themselves into chiming cathedrals of sound.

The group's self-titled new album has just hit stores, and they are set to appear tonight at the Echo. They're that rare band whose songs each feel completely realized -- which they ought to, since this is only the third record the New Year has released since its inception in 1999.

"I was talking to a Spanish interviewer," soft-spoken singer-songwriter Matt Kadane, 39, said from Ithaca, N.Y., where he works as a history professor. "And his English wasn't very good, and he asked, 'Are you detailistic or are you just lazy?'"

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The New Year grew out of a critically acclaimed '90s Dallas band Bedhead, which Kadane and his brother Bubba founded. Bedhead was tagged a "slo-core" group: It's been described as sort of what New Order or Galaxie 500 would sound like if they used no reverb or effects.

The original style, Kadane said, came from playing in a Velvet Underground-inspired experimental band with future Dixie Chick Martie Erwin (later Maguire) on fiddle.

"She very rightly left us for the Dixie Chicks," he allowed. "We wanted to find a way to produce that sustained tone of the fiddle or viola. The best way we could do that was to combine guitars, to just build chords from three different guitars."

Kadane admits the understated, texture-based formula hasn't changed all that much: "I still feel like the tempos we

lock into are the right ones. I never say, 'Bedhead was a slow band. We want this to be a fast band.'

Still, in a rave review of the new record, the *All Music Guide* describes the Kadane boys as becoming more expansive this time out: "The New Year," wrote Tim Sendra, "feels more song based with a richer, more arranged sound and a punchier rhythm section. . . a barely harnessed power that fills up a room."

That power mostly comes from reduction. "The New Year" resembles the other Kadane brothers productions in that it includes no false bravado, no distractions, no extra notes.

"I think about things in terms of negation," Kadane said. "I listen for things that bother me and try to negate them. In a string of eight notes, there's always one that's wrong. And with each layer you ask yourself the same question."

Sounds bloodless, right? But on a song like the poignant and majestic "Seven Days and Seven Nights," it's clear how much emotional energy this minimalist aesthetic can summon.

Despite the supposed slowness, Kadane says, his old band's membership to hard-core label Trance Syndicate taught them they had to step it up when playing out. A forceful 2005 tour with the devastating (and now-defunct) band *Silkworm*(band) proved that the New Year has learned that lesson well.

"We've never wanted to be quiet live," Kadane said. "Three guitarists can make a lot of sound, and it feels good to do that."