

## Dog days

**Sac-born sister duo talk song-writing, new album and Green Day**

**Gwendolyn and Lucy Giles** formed the rock duo Dog Party when they were 11 and 9 years old, respectively. As Lucy recalls, her sister, inspired by Green Day's *American Idiot*, got really into playing guitar—and Lucy got jealous.

"I was like, 'Well, what the heck? I want to play something, too.' So, I got a drum set for my birthday," she says. "My dad happened upon a cheap Reuther kit at a garage sale and it was the best birthday present ever. I was stoked."

by  
**Howard Hardee**

**Preview:**  
Dog Party performs  
Saturday, Jan. 12,  
8 p.m. Gutter Daisies  
and Severance  
Package open.  
Tickets: \$10

**The Maltese**  
1600 Park Ave.  
343-4915

Over that time, Dog Party has put out six albums of punky garage rock—including releases on Asian Man and Burger Records.

Born and raised in Sacramento, the sisters learned their instruments separately until a family friend led them through a rendition of The Beach Boys' "Surfin' USA." Being inexperienced players, they found it difficult to learn songs, so they started writing their own. They gravitated to punk rock partially because of the genre's simplicity, but also because it was a channel for preteen angst; Gwendolyn would come up with a guitar riff and Lucy would freestyle about her "friends being mean, or whatever."



Dog Party (from left): Lucy and Gwendolyn Giles.  
PHOTO BY CECILIA ROGUE

Looking back now, Lucy is surprised by what rose from the depths of her young subconscious. "I was a little feisty when I was younger," she said. "I was a fourth-grader full of rage."

Songwriting is a little different now that Gwendolyn (now 22) lives in San Luis Obispo and Lucy (20) is in Long Beach. They both play guitar and write songs separately, but still rely on each other for the finishing touches. "I love it when we collaborate, even if we're apart," Gwendolyn said. "Even if we can't sit down and write together, I can leave the opportunity for her to add to my songs."

The sisters' back-and-forth style of collaboration doesn't always go smoothly, though. In one instance, Lucy emailed Gwendolyn an early demo of the song "I'd Like to Know," which contains the lyrics, "There was a hit and run in your car/And you left me with a hundred scars." Months later, Gwendolyn sent her a song called "Hit & Run."

"I was mad," Lucy recalled. "I was like, *Gwen, I wrote the line 'hit and run' first. And then you come in with this whole song called 'Hit & Run'—now I have to go change mine.* But then we were like, *Wait, we can just capitalize on this and have a theme.* All of the songs are about relationships or friendships that felt like a hit and run."

The sisters play at The Maltese on Saturday, Jan. 12, in support of their new record—you guessed it—*Hit & Run*. The debut release on Dog Party's self-run Brat Music label, the album is engineered and produced by Chris Woodhouse (Thee Oh Sees, Ty Segall), who provides a slick finish to the band's usual mix of fast-paced punk and sugar-sweet vocal harmonies.

The sisters believe the balance between aggressive, guitar-forward rock and bubblegum pop helps pull listeners through the record.

"If every song is the same tempo, you get kind of lost and stop actually listening; you're just kind of hearing it," Lucy said.

"The mixture is what helps keep the band diverse and interesting," Gwendolyn added.

The song "Hit & Run" is on the poppy end of the spectrum as a ballad-esque single with a chorus strongly reminiscent of the melody in Green Day's slow-dancer, "Last Night on Earth." Perhaps the tune was embedded in Gwendolyn's subconscious; after all, Billie Joe Armstrong hand-picked Dog Party to support Green Day on 10 sold-out dates of its 2016 *Revolution Radio* tour.

"If it wasn't for Green Day, we wouldn't be a band," Lucy said. "It was one of those full-circle moments."



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