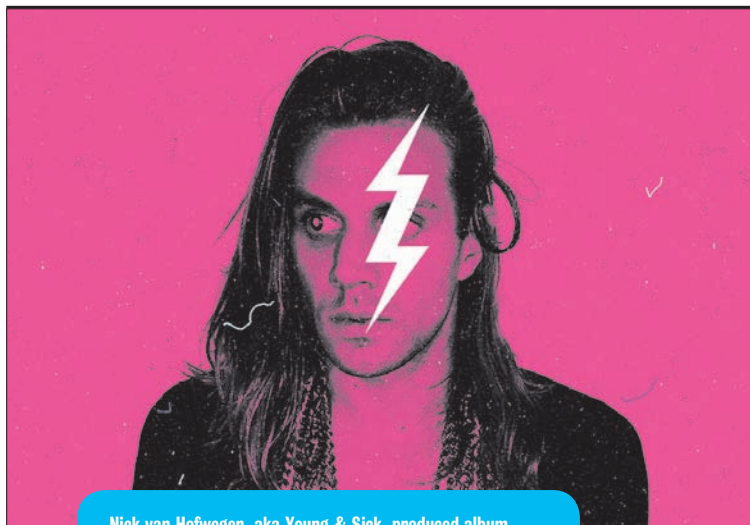


For your eyes and ears

Young & Sick shifts between visual art and soulful pop



Nick van Hofwegen, aka Young & Sick, produced album cover art for Robin Thicke, Maroon 5 and others.

BY HOWARD HARDEE

brother also helped me connect with techno and European dance music much more. My record is not techno in any way, shape or form, but it pushed me in a direction I'm very happy with."

The first single, "No Good," is driven by a four-on-the-floor beat and a wobbly synth bassline coupled with van Hofwegen's soulful, R&B-style vocals. Young & Sick lives in the same sonic world as Foster the People: There's a clear emphasis on groove, lots of falsetto singing, and the fun, goofy swagger of white boy funk.

"I've known Mark's music since I was 19, and we would always pass demos back and forth," he said. "We've always been on a similar path. It wasn't necessarily rubbing off on one another, but more so having similar taste and having known each other for so long."

Rather than setting a hard release date, Young & Sick is releasing *Sive of Release* as a series of singles, with a new song dropping every three weeks. Van Hofwegen says that decision is based on the oversaturation of media and the modern music listener's increasingly short attention span.

"I'm still in love with the idea of the record and the full LP, but it's wonderful to put out music in a more rapid-fire way," he said. "There's so much media being thrown in your face everywhere you look. ... It's hard for anyone, including myself, to keep up. I think you're doing everyone a favor by not dropping a double album one day and saying, 'Here's a song, here's a song, here's a song.'"

It's an innovative approach from an innovative artist. As he straddles the worlds of music and visual art, van Hofwegen has navigated the parallel paths of his career by following his creative intuition from one moment to the next. There's no reason to stay in the doldrums of writer's block, for example, when you can change focus entirely.

"If I ever get stuck with a piece of music," he said, "I make a piece of art."

Nick van Hofwegen used to be locked into the 9-to-5 grind of retail jobs. He bounced around several different department stores, his longest stint at a Louis Vuitton outlet in London; it was uninspiring work, but he still managed to pursue his dual interests of music and visual art on the side.

Thanks to "a mix of hard work and a stroke of luck," he's now able to work in both mediums full-time. His break came in 2010, when he told his longtime friend Mark Foster that he'd create the artwork for Foster's band's debut album—and he'd do it for free. The album, 2010's *Torches*, featured the single "Pumped Up Kicks," the chart-topping hit that turned Foster the People into indie-rock stars.

The spotlight helped van Hofwegen come into his own as a multi-faceted artist. Under the name Young & Sick, he's since created album artwork for Maroon 5 (*Overexposed*), Robin Thicke (*Blurred Lines*) and others.

As a musician, he's an up-and-comer on the verge of dropping his debut EP. Young & Sick is gaining exposure by supporting electronic duo The Knocks on its tour of North America, including a stop at Ace of Spades on Thursday, January 31.

Speaking to SN&R from the road, van Hofwegen says the prospect of playing with The Knocks influenced the direction of the EP, *Sive and Release*.

"I was working on the music before I heard the news that I would be going on tour with them," he said. "When that came into play, I subconsciously started making things more beat-heavy and simple and danceable, more uptempo than some of the stuff I've done previously. My trips to Berlin to visit my

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Nick van Hofwegen,
Young & Sick

Check out Young & Sick, opening for The Knocks at Ace of Spades on Thursday, January 31. Show starts at 6:30pm. Tickets are \$20. Blue DeTiger also performs. For show info, visit aceofspadessac.com.

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