



THE XX

What We Were Feeling

After a surprising ascendance,
The xx learn to balance
sensitivity with popularity

STORY **MATTHEW BOHNIPPER**
PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON NOOITO**

The xx is spread out across two circular wooden tables in the drab lunchroom of Music Bank, a large warehouse in an industrial complex in South London. It's early May, and the trio is preparing for three shows—their first in over a year and a half—essentially dress rehearsals before a headlining performance at the Primavera Sound festival in Spain later in the month. The first show will be held at Electrowerkz, a tiny club in an alley. Here at Music Bank, the band has been practicing a handful of songs from their forthcoming second album, *Coezist*, as well as relearning the old ones that have fallen out of practice. It's tedious, monotonous work, more akin to memorizing multiplication tables than making art. Commensurately, the enthusiasm meter in the room is at negative a billion. The only thing providing anyone with any reason for excitement is dessert. Along with the rented rehearsal space comes a private chef, and they are over the moon about the banoffee pie, a banana and cream concoction he's ingeniously served individual portions of into wineglasses. They eat it and, looking up from smartphones and *The Daily Mail*, encourage me to do the same, before filing back into a gated elevator down to the big blue rehearsal space.

The band is set up in the back by the windows, where they repeatedly play their 30-minute set. Being party to this private concert is at first extremely exciting, but over and over, with no one to share it with, it morphs, as bassist Oliver Sim succinctly and depressingly puts it, into "a gig no one showed up to." He knows what that feels like. "When our album came out, everyone was like, 'Where did this band come from?'" says guitarist Romy Madley-Croft. "What was kind of funny is we had been playing for three years in shit pubs. This time around we didn't have the opportunity to go and play at a shit pub, basically. It would have actually been constructive." This is her modest way of saying they are too famous to do things the way they used to. The xx playing anywhere is an event, and a show at a "shit pub" would cause pandemonium.

That pandemonium has made them a lot of money and, like any exploratory young musicians, they've splurged on new

DSREPS

dsreps.com
© DSReps

New York

(917) 407-4292

Nicki Silverman: nicki@dsreps.com

Los Angeles

(626) 441-2224

Deborah Schwartz: deb@dsreps.com

Crystal Roberts: crystal@dsreps.com