

202020

Damon & Naomi
The Sub Pop Years
202020.10

Compiling the best of Damon & Naomi's records over the course of four albums on the venerable Sub Pop label, *The Sub Pop Years* commemorates a grand chapter in the career of a band who never planned an existence in the first place. After *More Sad Hits* (just reissued last year on 20/20/20), the duo were ready to call it a day to their music careers and concentrate on their book company. However, they were convinced to continue onwards by Sub Pop poobah Jonathan Poneman, who saw great potential in their continued collaboration. It was not the first, nor last time, his hunches proved right. For the next ten years, Damon & Naomi developed from a simple recording project to a fully fleshed out band, with a knack for articulating sounds and accumulating collaborators that still continues today.



Every early Damon & Naomi release was an event by virtue of its very existence, and *Wondrous World of Damon & Naomi* was no exception. It was not the final signature to an abridged letter, like *More Sad Hits* was, but rather marked new forays down future pathways. An eagerness to experiment with folk music formats from around the world, combined with the developing abilities of two true artists play out throughout this compilation, displaying the duo's growing sound. Each album is indeed a leap, the most notable being *With Ghost*, where a friendship with the Japanese psych band Ghost led to one of the greatest cross-cultural collaborations in the history of independent music. For a couple of musicians who prided themselves on a minimal delivery, their goals went up against the opportunity of having a large ensemble at their disposal. This, along with their growing comfort as band leaders becomes clear upon a full listen to *Sub Pop Years*. What emerges is something real and human, with both foibles and innovations, resulting in a unique honesty both awe-striking and endearing to witness.

Damon & Naomi continue recording and performing today, ever more focused on pushing themselves towards new challenges within humble settings. The specially-priced *Sub Pop Years* captures much of the Story Until Now with a conciseness and breadth that will enrich both a longtime fan and the first time listener. As the CD is being released simultaneously with a DVD compiling live performances and videos, as well as a special reissue of all three Galaxie 500 albums (the first reissues ever of the vinyl), *Sub Pop Years* is part of a larger look back before the band finishes up their new record, slated for release in 2010.

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For any and all inquiries, please don't hesitate to contact Hunter, Ben, or Sharon, all
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On DAMON & NAOMI'S SUB POP ALBUMS:

THE WONDROUS WORLD OF DAMON & NAOMI

"After my last shows in the 70's, I became a Music Celibate for almost 20 years. In 1996 my son Dave gave me this CD. I thought it was the most beautiful thing in the world, with songs I really needed to learn how to play. Damon & Naomi found ten ways of talking about sadness without being sad-a wondrous and necessary achievement."

-- **Tom Rapp (Pearls Before Swine)**

PLAYBACK SINGERS

"I sat beside Damon and Naomi at a screening of the classic underground drag movie *Flaming Creatures*, which is very beautiful and very, very slow. As most of the audience gradually trickled out or fell asleep, Damon and Naomi got more intrigued, till by the end of the event-free film they wore beatific smiles. Soon afterward, they started their book-publishing company, Exact Change, which published Kafka ephemera and John R. Stilgoe's *Shallow-Water Dictionary*, a paean to marshes and estuaries.

"So, years before hearing their music, I could visualize exactly what they were going to sound like: like Kafka, Kafka père and Josef K in drag, pulling a rowboat slowly and quietly through chartreuse reeds in the gray dawn. Not unlike their previous band, *Galaxie 500*.

"On *Playback Singers (Sub Pop)*, recorded at home on digital eight-track, Naomi brings breathy singing to new plateaus, and Damon sings much like Neil Young slowed down. A few guitars, mostly acoustic, a little harmonium, noodling bass and occasional light percussion fill in the long pauses between such languidly intoned phrases as 'It's so hard being me.' The undemanding lyrics are vague and filled with water, shadows, reflections and air. Those who think Nick Drake was a speed freak will love it, and those who like to fall asleep to music will never hear the last song, Tom Rapp's lovely 'Translucent Carriages.'

"In concert, Damon and Naomi perform unaccompanied, sounding even more bare than their records and just as languorous. They are probably the quietest rock group in the United States."

— **Stephin Merritt (The Magnetic Fields)**

DAMON & NAOMI WITH GHOST

"If the soaring arc of Damon and Naomi's melodies intersecting with Ghost's earthly meditations doesn't bring a tear to your eye, there's a chance you are already dead. This is mountain-peak listening par excellence."

-- **Ben Chasny (Six Organs of Admittance)**

"PS - And I don't consider the mountain-peak comment hyperbolic. I have actually listened to this record on a mountain-peak!"

SONG TO THE SIREN: LIVE IN SAN SEBASTIAN

"One afternoon when we were 17 or 18, we went round to a friend's house, and he played us 'This Car Climbed Mount Washington' by a new band called Damon & Naomi. A tough kid from the school burst into tears. It was an extraordinary moment; here was music capable of taming brute beasts, and here was also all the promise and strange, distant loveliness of *Galaxie 500* reborn into something new.

"In the late 1990s, we heard they were coming to London. My band sent out carefully worded announcements that we were available as openers, forgetting in our excitement that we had yet to release any records, and that no one had ever heard of us. We wore the promoter down over the next two years though, and we finally got to play with Damon & Naomi in a small club in Wolverhampton in 2001, nervously tuning up and smoking cigarettes before taking the stage.

"After that we played together whenever we could, whether New York, Boston or London, in fact anywhere but Wolverhampton. Damon does not have a youthful voice, or an indie voice – he has an ageless voice, full of beautiful weariness, a gypsy voice. Naomi's eerie, counter-intuitive accompaniments and Kurihara's electric guitar mesh behind it perfectly. This recording captures their live sound, which I remember most clearly from Wolverhampton, sitting at a table in a town in the middle of nowhere, too delighted to even take notes."

-- **Alasdair Maclean (The Clientele)**