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VISITING ACT | Elves and Warriors and Stuff

A Q&A with Athens' Elf Power

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Elves 2006 (L to R): Almstead, Rieger, Carter, Fernandes, Lott, and Hughes

Athens indie-rock collective Elf Power are still rolling strong after over a decade of lo-fi, melody-driven rock music-making. They have seven albums and two EPs tucked snugly under their belt, and a record label/environmental project (Orange Twin) to boot. Their latest tour finds Elf Power a half-dozen strong — guitarist John Fernandes (of The Olivia Tremor Control, The Circulatory System), cellist Heather McIntosh, drummer Josh Lott (ex -Paper Lions), Laura Carter, bassist Derek Almstead (of Summer Hymns, Of Montreal), and guitarist Jimmy Hughes — flaunting everything from clarinet to accordion on stage. We caught up with singer/guitarist Andrew Rieger, pre-tour, to get his thoughts on a handful of random topics:

CITY PAPER: It must get a bit unruly with large groups traveling together...

Andrew Rieger: We're used to it by now; we've been doing it for a long time. It's actually great to travel that way because that way, if you get sick of somebody, you can just ignore them or hang out with someone else.

CP: Elf Power have been a fixture of the Athens scene for a long time — have you ever considered going somewhere else to shake it up a bit?

AR: We did live in New York for a year, and I lived in Chicago for a while, but I kinda always come back to Athens. There are just so many great musicians here. It's just really an easy place to live because the cost of living is a lot

cheaper than other places around the country.

CITY PAPER: You definitely tour a lot. Do you have a "dream tour" you'd like to do?

AR: We've done a lot of the dream tours that I had when I was growing up. We've toured Europe five or six times, we've been to Japan, we've toured with R.E.M., Dinosaur Jr., and Wilco ... some of my favorite bands. This time, we're doing the South and the Midwest and the East Coast. We're playing every night for 31 days. The way we look at it is, if we're out there, we'd rather be playing every night. It's not fun to be sitting in some hotel somewhere in Ohio when you can play with some people; it makes it go faster.

CP: Who would you like to see "guest star" on the next Elf Power record?

AR: There's tons of people that we'd like to collaborate with. We've worked with some people that we admire; Vic Chesnutt played on our last album. I'd love to work with Brian Eno, because he's probably my favorite producer out of any out there.

CP: What is the biggest compliment paid to you thus far in your career?

AR: One time, we were playing in Los Angeles and this kid came up and he was tripping out of his mind on LSD and he told me that I came to him often when he was on his acid trips – we explored these different worlds together and he wanted me to acknowledge that this had happened, so I just agreed with him. I thought that this was cool, that I took these otherworldly trips with this guy. That was a nice compliment. Maybe he's out there, traveling in another dimension.

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