

GOING UNDERGROUND

There is so much good Thai music out there, all you have to do is dig a little. Beyond Carabao and Bodyslam and Four Mod is a vibrant music scene often overlooked by major record labels and music enthusiasts.

At the forefront of innovation in the Thai music scene are Montonn "Jay" Jira and Joni Anwar, who together form Katsue.

You might remember Montonn from last year's Sony PSP commercial, or the movie *Pop Star*, or as an MTV VJ in the late '90s.

Joni started out life as one half of rap duo Raptor, then went on to star in movies including *Dek Ra Bead* and *Ahingsa-Jikko Mee Gam*. Jay and Joni are typical poster boys – *look kreung*, pale skin, gorgeous eyes – but their CD *And So it Goes* is one of the best Thai electronica albums yet.

And So it Goes fused Jay's immaculate production skills – he's worked with Justin Timberlake and Pharell from N.E.R.D – with Joni's sublime voice to create a down-tempo, sweeping LP full of simple beats and dreamy keys. The album is polished with lyrics in English language.

At the other end of the spectrum are Kid Insane, an up-and-coming indie band who have been making waves in recent months thanks to a killer debut album.

The band could be described as a combination of Radiohead and the Smashing Pumpkins. "The sound is dirty, the drums are spliced and diced, and the guitars are distorted," said lead singer Sam Burns.

Insomniac is an album with Thai- and English-language lyrics. The title track is a moody, atmospheric number that shows the



Sam Burns, lead vocals with Kid Insane, takes the mic at the Fat Festival in Bangkok. Kid Insane, though currently still inexperienced, are one up-and-coming Thai band to keep an eye out for in the next few years.

enormous potential this band have for creating innovative, inspiring sounds. The album took two years to produce and is radically different to the usual honey-coated pop on MTV and Channel V.

Like Montonn Jira and Joni Anwar, Sam Burns is another *luk kreung* trying to make it big in the Thai music industry. Born and

raised in London, Sam's move to Thailand followed a similar path to many *luk kreung*: commercials here, movies there and the obligatory modeling shoots.

Kid Insane are still inexperienced and their lives shows have been known to drag on, with the band performing far too many cover versions. In the future, though, Kid Insane will be a band to look out for.

On the subject of cover versions, one of the reasons the Thai indie scene finds it so difficult to evolve is because the vast majority of unsigned, newer bands don't play their own songs in public. The karaoke mentality is reflected – and reinforced – when bands simply choose to cover other people's songs.

For quick entertainment or

mild nostalgia this can be fun, but if a band are that good and they can play their instruments that well, there should be more original music.

If you're looking for some genuine original material, then one of the most interesting Thai albums of the past 12 months was Garuna's *Vanity Project*, an LP that captured the essence of modern living with its blissed-out electronic sounds. It was such a simple idea and it was so inoffensive that most people overlooked the album.

Lead singer Art explained, "It's about we as humans being vain. We are surrounded by things without true lasting value."

Tracks such as the beautiful *So-Hi* blend Art's luscious vocals with frontman Kris's production work.

The album has lazy Sunday afternoons written all over it. The 15 tracks are sugary and dreamily melodic; a touch more serene

than Katsue's *And So it Goes*. But it doesn't end there. If you're into

real, powerful,

guitar-driven music then check out Goose, who are as close to a Thai version of Explosions in the Sky as you are likely to find.

After opening for Keane during the English trio's visit to Thailand, many people were left wondering who were this band who didn't say anything to the crowd, but instead pounded them with riff after riff on multiple guitars. Goose are Thailand's original post-rock band.

Formed in 2002 by five friends in Bangkok, Goose won the "best group" award at last year's Fat Festival.

If you can get hold of the albums *Goose* and *20 Guns Pointing in Your Face* then you will be in for a treat.

For more information about these bands in Thailand visit: www.myspace.com/katsueband, www.myspace.com/kidinsano www.myspace.com/garuna and www.myspace.com/verygoose

<p>* Price for July - October</p> <p>Thermage Face only 40,000 B. Face & neck 60,000 B.</p> <p>BOTOX start at 5,000 B.</p> <p>Restylane 10,000+ B.</p> 	<p>Phuket Laser Center</p>  <p>LASIK Laser Vision Correction for both eyes 66,000 B.</p> 
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