

FemBots



*"Over radio waves and a maze of wires down below the street, the message flows out a breath behind the beat. While dead voices on the dial sing the same dead song."
(from 'Count Down our Days', The City)*

With a stronger lyrical focus and a richer, more collaborative sound, *The City* is a story of stories – a sometimes affectionate, sometimes angry ode to the FemBots hometown, its buried past and uncertain future.

The FemBots began as a home recording project of Dave MacKinnon and Brian Poirier. Their debut, *Mucho Cuidado* (2000), featured songs written and performed on power tools, toys and broken down thrift store instruments. The duo quickly carved a unique space in the Toronto music scene bringing their post-industrial folk songs to the stage using tape loops and reel-to-reel machines mixed with often frantic live performances. Their critically-acclaimed second release, *Small Town Murder Scene* (2003), pushed the weirdness and angularity of their debut into the background and adopted a more atmospheric approach that bridged the gap between the extremes of their sound. The result – an album where murder ballads float above a collage of found sounds and somber instrumentals break into festive sing-alongs before crumbling into mechanical noise.

Following the release of *Small Town Murder Scene*, the FemBots spent two years touring North America. Somewhere along the way the duo expanded to a full band.

The FemBots began work on a third record at their Junkshop studio in the spring of 2005. Casting off the cut and paste approach of their previous efforts, they brought together some of Toronto's finest musicians including: Jason Tait (Weakerthans) on drums, & vibraphone; Greg Smith (Weakerthans, Martin Tielli) bass; Julie Penner (Bob Wiseman) violin; James Anderson (Singing Saw Shadow Show) banjo, singing saw, wine glasses and typewriter; Nathan Lawr (Royal City) drums; Mark Hansen (Ron Hawkins and The Rusty Nails) drums; Krista Muir (Lederhosen Lucil) vocals on *The City*; Lawrence Nichols (Lowest Of The Low) harmonica; The Crying Out Loud Choir; Jeremy Strachan, saxophone; Joe Shabason, saxophone; and, Bryden Baird, trumpet; with horns arranged by Paul Aucoin (Hylozoists, Sadies).

The resulting album, *The City*, unveils a rich, authentic, sound that builds upon the FemBots earlier work while moving in new directions. Banging piano chords, catchy choruses, soulful vocals, swinging guitars, woven string and horns push the stark black and white vision of their earlier albums into full technicolor bloom all the while remaining true to the emotional core of the songs. At its heart *The City* is an homage to the band's hometown – its victories and failures, told in vignettes of everyday life (*So Long* and *My Life in the Funeral Service*), odes to lost neighborhoods (*Demolition Waltz*), and laments for a place whose history is being buried under waves of condo development (*History Remade*). However, the FemBots are not jaded, their love for their city also comes through clearly on this album. At times raucous and loud, at others mournful and haunting, *The City* is the FemBots most personal album to date.

The FemBots have drawn comparisons to Califone, My Morning Jacket, and Wilco but their sound is not easily categorized. Neither alt-country, nor indie rock their music is perhaps best described as 'Americana' placing a strong emphasis on songwriting and lyrics while allowing room for experimentation. Influenced by a wide range of music - from Rock 'n Roll, Blues, Soul, Country, and Folk - they continue their genre bending approach, honing a new style from the old. With each new album the FemBots transform in ways unforeseen, yet strangely familiar.

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