

Ocean Park Standoff Doesn't Need to Release an Album

Getting to know Samantha Ronson, Pete Nappi and Ethan Thompson's new music group.

BY LEIGH NORDSTROM PHOTOGRAPH BY JILLIAN SOLLAZZO



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cean Park Standoff can't seem to sit still for long. The music trio, helmed by Samantha Ronson alongside bandmates Pete Nappi and Ethan Thompson, bounce their way through Bryant Park as a photographer follows suit, hopping onto a merry-go-round for a spin and climbing atop the public library's structures, before settling down at a coffee shop to discuss birthday keggers, their mascot Thunder (which one surmises is Ronson's dog: "first small dog born of woman," as she puts it), and — yes! — the music they make together.

The group has been performing electronic pop since October 2016, and is fueled not by chart success or online feedback, but rather an interest in testing out songs in front of an audience and seeing what sticks.

"We just started off as a couple of friends writing songs together, and we never knew what being in a band would be like," Thompson says. "So I think the more we play together, too, the more we're discovering that vibe amongst us and amongst the tribe that we're gathering around the music."

"And it's making us more confident I think, as well," Ronson says.

The trio has been steadily releasing singles "every six to eight weeks, depending on mood swings," Ronson says. Perhaps an indicator of growing confidence, the band has no plans on the horizon for an album, but rather is using the experience of releasing singles and touring as a way to gauge what kind of music to play. Live audience feedback over Instagram hype?

"Basically, we're just trying to, like, play for as many people as we can," Ronson says. "Because it's fun; that's the fun part, getting to see people react and getting to connect with them. So much is online nowadays, so you miss that human connection."

Ronson and Nappi were introduced by their manager and publisher, respectively, on what they call a "musical playdate." Nappi played her a song he had done with Thompson, and adding him into the fold was floated out.

"And we wrote 'Lost Boys' the first day; the second day, we wrote 'Good News,'" Ronson says, referencing two of their singles. "And we were like 'eh, we'll keep doing this.'"

Thompson interjects: "I wonder if we should re-create the story where it's like, 'I was backpacking through the Himalayas, and I saw a wounded bird, and Samantha was helping me with this bird that was wounded and we didn't know each other and...I mean, I did rescue bunnies once when I was on my way to the session.'"

"He did," Ronson says. "I was like, 'that's our singer.'"

That, and a shared interest in this very organic, come-as-it-may approach to making music, has seemingly made them a perfect fit.

"I grew up being obsessed with singer/songwriters, and that's kind of where Ethan and I connect on that level," Ronson says. "But I also was a DJ playing hip-hop and pop and all that stuff. So I think it's like where we all kind of meet in the middle."

"And we always try anything, and I think that's what makes the music what it is," Thompson said. "Pete's over there producing on it, so he always has a common thread that he strings through everything."

"He's kind of making, like, sense of all the noise that we throw at him," Ronson says. "Or making nonsense of the sense that we throw at him."

"I like that," Thompson tells her. "Making nonsense of the sense, since 2016."

Every day I'm reading about children getting separated from their families and getting adopted into American culture and it breaks my heart because that's exactly what happened to indigenous people. Children were taken away from their families, forced to only speak English and had to wear Western clothing. The Lakota language is basically a dead language now because of it. The country worked really hard to eliminate all indigenous culture, I think that's something that is woven into the fabric of our nation. I don't think this is a new thing that's happening and I think we really need to examine who we are as a people and confront it to move forward."

— JESSICA CHASTAIN ON HOW THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S FAMILY SEPARATION POLICY RELATES TO HER FILM "WOMAN WALKS AHEAD," AT THE MOVIE'S NEW YORK SCREENING.

