



**XIU XIU** is Caralee McElroy, Jamie Stewart, Ches Smith and Devin Hoff. You can catch Xiu Xiu on tour when they play at Rubbles in Mt. Pleasant on March 16.

Press Photo/JUSTIN DRABEK

# Rendezvous with Xiu Xiu

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*Xiu Xiu plays devastatingly beautiful and unique music that challenges and conveys the unspoken words of pain and suffering on a universal level. The group is made up of four individuals who tour the nation relentlessly and release new records left and right.*

*While in San Francisco I was presented with the opportunity to catch up with the band in West Oakland to discuss their latest album, "Women as Lovers," their upcoming tour featuring the new addition of band member Devin Hoff, life on the road and their the numerous trips to RadioShack and Denny's.*

**WPP:** How has preparation for this tour been different than for previous ones?

**Jamie Stewart:** This will be our first tour without a drum machine. We've only practiced like this for two days. At the moment it is a little early to tell; we have five more days to practice, and by the grace of god we will have it together by then. And of course, that includes the addition of having Devin play.

**Ches Smith:** I've been with the band for two tours now, and when Jamie asked me to join Xiu Xiu, I just couldn't picture it. I just kept on thinking: What is this macho stuff that I am adding to this? I felt it was going to alienate everyone, but maybe that was the point. Dedicated Xiu Xiu fans gave me good feedback. In most cases I don't care what people think, but for this it was nice to know I wasn't bumming everyone out. I'm just glad the fans weren't like, "Yeah, who is the testosterone metal guy?"

**Caralee McElroy:** That's how I think of you all the time, Ches. I just kept saying how badly I wanted Ches to be in the band because he is a Rock n' Roll metal dude.

**CS:** Yeah, I'm like Rocky. And now it's way different with Devin; I could never see that happening. I am kind of the least visionary member. But with Devin it's been really fun even just in the rehearsals.

**WPP:** What is life like on the road?

**CS:** It's a lot of trips to RadioShack!

**CM:** And we go to Denny's every day.

**JS:** On the east coast the drives aren't as long, and we all have friends there so it makes it a bit more bearable. But it's mostly just driving and going until you get home.

**WPP:** In what ways do you keep your mind engaged while just going from state to state and show to show?

**JS:** I'll bring three different books with levels of different intellectual difficulty. In the first week I'll read something like the political history of Iraq from 1914 to 1918, then in the next week I'll be able to read a mid-fifties Japanese novel, but by the third week I can basically read Us Weekly. [Laughs] It requires a descending level of intellectual capabilities as you get tired.

**WPP:** How does spending so much time with each other on the road affect the friendships that you guys have with one another?

**CM:** Basically, there will be teams. It's going to be Jamie and I against each other, and it will be Ches and Devin against each other. Then it will be Devin against me and Ches against Jamie.

**JS:** We've already done so much mean stuff to each other. If anything was going to affect our friendship, I doubt you would find us in the same room.

**CM:** If you're having a bad day...

**JS:** It is totally awesome to play music about having a bad day. (Laughs)

**CM:** No, it's because it's very therapeutic to be on stage banging away on a cymbal.

**CS:** Unfortunately, the tension really works; I never really used to buy into that.

**CM:** It makes you play with more emotion – not that I'm telling people to play in bands with people they hate. Otherwise, you know if you don't have that friendship, the other important aspects of being in a band won't work.

**CS:** Yeah, I yelled at Devin today and hung up on Caralee.

**Devin Hoff:** You yelled at Caralee from the lobby of a Best Buy.

**CS:** Yeah, but that was between stops at RadioShack three and four.

**WPP:** How is your perception of "Women As Lovers" as opposed to the other records?

**CS:** I feel Jamie really opened up the process more collaboratively; before that I was just recording stuff, Jamie would take it and I wouldn't know where it was going. I just feel like I have much more invested in the music.

**CM:** I think just because we are practicing for the tour, and I have been listening to the songs so much, for me it has been a little blah, but I definitely think that this is the best record that Xiu Xiu has ever made. And I think that has to do with having Ches take part in the writing process. I feel very close to the songs right now, but at the same time I am analyzing them from a very technical standpoint. So it is really hard for me to think of it as an album right now.

**CS:** Right now it is a series of physical motions. Kind of like first level Spanish.

**JS:** I don't like to look at records like that. With every record, we did the best we could do at the time. I guess I don't even think of them necessarily as separate records; they are just a continuation of songs that happen to be codified on one particular CD. We have a studio in the house, so it's not like once one record is done we stop working on music for a year.

**CM:** But you don't think of them as like different periods of your life?

**JS:** I guess I just think of when Xiu Xiu started up until now. It just doesn't seem fruitful at all to be analytical on something you have worked on; I don't understand the point. I'm really insecure about music generally. For me it's just important to finish something and then start working on the next thing. I think maybe once the band is over I can listen to the records as music. But at the moment I am thinking about rehearsal and working on the next record. I hope to god that if people buy the record, they get something out of it. But there is nothing I can do about that at all.