

# FROM THE BORDER TOWNS

A. ARMADA SHUNS LYRICS FOR CORRIDORS OF MUSICAL GUMPTION



Courtesy A. Armada

## A. ARMADA

### WHO'S WHO

Jeremy "Catfish" Harbin (drums)  
Josh McCauley (guitar)  
Matt Nelson (guitar)  
Bryant Williamson (bass)

### FORMED

2005 in Athens, GA

### LABEL

Hello Sir Records

### LATEST RELEASE

*Anam Cara* (2008)

### ON THE WEB

[www.myspace.com/aarmada](http://www.myspace.com/aarmada)

It's where Coke came to life, and where thousands of soldiers prepare for war. It's home to a major cinema corporation and an insurance company best known for a talking duck.

And, of course, Columbus, Georgia is a hotbed of post-rock music.

Huh?

"I don't know what it is, maybe it's that border with Alabama," said Columbus-native Matt Nelson, guitarist and cofounder of the post-rock quartet A. Armada. "Maybe it's those kids in Phenix City buying Mogwai records (laughs)."

Enthralled by The Applesseed Cast and Godspeed You! Black Emperor ("I saw them, it was amazing," Nelson said, "that is what music is to me"), Nelson joined forces with guitarist Josh McCauley in 2002 to form A. Armada. Shunning lyrics for instrumental experimentation, the duo toured the town sharing their musical revelation.

It found followers.

"We had this show opening up for (A. Armada) when they were first starting out," said Jeremy Harbin, also from Columbus. "They were doing what we were doing but so much

better. I remember being pissed off a little bit because they were so much better. We didn't know each other but we were both in Columbus listening to the same bands. The rest is history."

Well, not quite. One move to Athens, ("We couldn't stay in Columbus," said Nelson, "it's sad, but you have to get out of a place like that to let your music speak to people"), one drummer and one bassist later, the history of A. Armada is only now being written in earnest. With the addition of Harbin on drums and Bryant Williamson (who with Nelson is a member of Athens' stalwarts Cinemachanica) on bass, A. Armada has forged a promising path, highlighted by the release of its initial EP (*Anam Cara*) and a European tour.

The tour, which took the four through the Czech Republic, Austria, Germany, France ("and Luxembourg, you can't forget Luxembourg, the best place on Earth" said Nelson), proved a revelation. Supporting From Monument to Masses, an experimental band from San Francisco, they played sizable rooms with throngs of appreciative fans.

"The shows every night

surprised us," Harbin said.

"We'd go to a show and say 'this is gonna be the night where no one comes out' and people would show up every night."

"We'd talk to people and they'd say 'this is a big show for us, we're really excited,'" Williamson said.

Post-rock can be a hard sell, but for A. Armada it opens endless corridors. The European reception reaffirmed their position as musicians searching for new territory.

"I think the problem is people don't like the definition," Harbin said. "Saying you're post-rock is almost as bad as saying you're emo. People go 'Post-rock? I've heard Explosions in the Sky, and people try to do that band and not do it as well.' It's like they've given up on it."

"Musically you can experiment and go in so many different places without keeping vocals in mind," Williamson said. "In order to make vocals work you have to stray more into pop structure. If you take it out of the equation, it's easier to experiment with dynamics."

*Anam Cara* is a testament to this dynamism. The songs, with titles such as "The Moon Shifts The Sea The Sea

Shapes The Shore The Shore Shakes The Sand The Sand Sinks The Ship" (try writing lyrics to that) feature layered guitars slow to start, rising with ringing crescendos, punctuated by Harbin's manic work behind the kit.

"Typically a riff is brought in and we work from there," Nelson said of the band's song writing. "We'll get to a stopping point and go home and think about it. When we get back to the space and feed off each other, ideas come together to make the final result."

"For us, this first EP is a stepping stone," Williamson said. "It's the first recording of us together, so we're incredibly pumped."

Work has begun on a full-length album, and the band is playing South By Southwest in March. While plans for a U.S. tour are in discussion, there is one city the band has eyes on in February.

"We're playing Columbus," said Nelson. "We're rocking the hometown."

And the post-rock legacy lives on.

— Ed Morales