

Photo by Jonathan Synder.



## Mi Ami: Wet and Wild

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It's a Saturday afternoon, and Daniel Martin-McCormick is using breakfast to describe his band, [Mi Ami](#). "I love when you go out to breakfast and get eggs, toast, hashbrowns, and coffee. All those things fit together nicely on a plate," he explains. "If you think about the way you would construct a song, bass, drums, and guitar are archetypes of frequency ranges and the way that sounds are made. The drums propel it, the bass holds down the low-end and locks in with the drums, and the guitar sits on top."

As simple as that sounds, Mi Ami is actually very complex. Comprised of Martin-McCormick on vocals and guitar, bassist Jacob Long, and drummer Damon Palermo, the band builds post-disco jams that constantly shift, transforming into noise freak-outs and layered dub grooves. On their debut full-length, *Watersports*, the band drops hints of surprising influences like Arthur Russell, Ricardo Villalobos, and Manuel Göttsching, but also nods to African guitar music, post-punk, and free jazz. "It's not that we're beyond influence, because that's a fucking preposterous and super-pompous thing to say," Martin-McCormick admits. "It's more about cultivating this conversation we're having with each other than looking back at our old records."

Martin-McCormick met Palermo when he was studying classical guitar at San Francisco State University. Both connected over a desire to bridge their loves of noise, disco, and punk. "I had this really good feeling [about meeting Palermo], kind of like when you first meet a girl and you're like, 'Oh, shit,'" Martin-McCormick recalls. "I didn't want to come on too strong but I was pretty sure that it was going to be something awesome."

They recruited bassist Jacob Long a year later. Martin-McCormick had previously played with Long in the proto dance-punk band Black Eyes, but felt limited by their compromised dynamic. "It was not a band that I feel like had a unified vision," he says. "It didn't have a strong clarity of purpose so much as a lot of energy coming from each member that wound up in the shape of songs."

As a trio, however, Mi Ami has struck the perfect balance between collaboration and individual vision. That democratic ethos certainly pays off on *Watersports*. From the opening dub sound of "Echononecho," through the messy-but-joyful guitars on tracks like "New Guitar," the album showcases some familiar rock moves (the quiet/loud dynamic, pulsating dance moments, thrash excursions) as interpreted through the diverse perspectives of three very obsessive music fans.

Going to music school and studying heady, high-art compositions, Martin-McCormick felt the pressure to achieve. "I got really stressed out for a while because I thought I needed to be making masterpieces or making music that somehow represented the grand mystery of the cosmos," he says. Rather than give up, he realized that he could pair his lofty ambitions with the immediacy and urgency of punk rock. "I think art is where you should have a bold, flawed, personal vision. The world doesn't need any well-oiled art machines. We don't need perfection. We need humanity and flaws."

MP3: ["New Guitar"](#)

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