



# United they stand

Brothers Movement are much more than just a repackaged Irish band. Hard graft and serious music have taken them in a whole new direction



**S**OME PEOPLE are born to wear their hair just so, and their leather jackets and sunglasses without looking in the slightest bit idiotic. Say hello, then, to Dublin's Brothers Movement, various members of which you might have seen and heard before when they were flaunting their love for the likes of Black Rebel Motorcycle Club and The Jesus and Mary Chain in a band called Mainline.

Mainline, however, is so 2007, so all hail Brothers Movement, a band centred on the talents of brothers Neil and Conor Paxton, who, as a unit, decided to send Mainline to the music equivalent of the elephant's graveyard, retune their guitars and start all over again.

As is so often the case, a change of heart and direction is directly proportional to a change in fortunes, and while it's safe to say the band will not be giving up their day jobs just yet (these range from working in a car rental firm to a bank), it is equally a reasonably good prediction that this time next year many more people will be familiar with their music.

Since the release of their self-titled debut album in November last, the band have picked up impressive coverage in *NME* and *The Ticket*, as well as ratcheting up industry buzz with appearances at last year's Texas-based SXSW as well as at the Hard Working Class Heroes festival.

Neil and Conor argue that the biggest change in their attitude towards the natural formulation of a new kind of music for them came about when they were recording their debut album in Philadelphia almost two years ago.

"The previous recordings we'd go to the studio and then return home," says Neil, "but this time we were actually living in the studio. We had four blow-up beds there, and there'd be old tape machines with big red lights shining at you throughout the night. We'd wake up in the morning, put away the beds, and start recording immediately. The people we worked with got the best out of us that way."

So far, the Brothers Movement have made all the right decisions in how to distance themselves from a previous incarnation. The new band, they claim, is like wearing a new jacket. With Mainline, recalls Conor, "it's almost as if some people were judging us on the clothes we wore. Black leather jackets and long hair? We're making music, not fashion statements. It's a lazy reason to dislike any band. I read in one place that we had flight cases for our leather jackets. Stuff like that just makes you laugh."

Particularly so when you realise that the band graft hard and regularly so as to get their name and music out and about. Not being signed to a major label (their album is licensed to different indie labels for different countries) may allow them the freedom to do virtually as they please, but it also

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means little or no financial backing in areas where they might need it most.

"Self-funding comes through the passion of wanting to do the music," states Conor. "Everything is funded by ourselves, and although it takes a bit of time, it's worth it. Everything in our lives revolves around the music. I've had to leave a job before in order to head somewhere to record. Ultimately, it's what we do best."

There is frustration in the lack of radio play for Irish acts. Or if not that, then certainly the lopsided approach of radio programming, wherein the likes of U2 and Westlife grab the lion's share of airplay while the likes of Brothers Movement (and too many others

to mention) barely merit a sentence at a meeting let alone actual airtime on commercial radio.

"In Europe, it's far looser," reckons Neil. "I'm not saying they have to play new bands all the time on radio stations in Ireland, but there is far too much similar stuff being played. There's a constant flow of rubbish music on national radio. I used to work in a factory, and you'd hear the likes of Robbie Williams about eight times a day. That's an average of once an hour, which is madness."

Madness, indeed. This year, Brothers Movement's primary plan is to spread the word as geographically wide as possible. Their UK distributor, Rocket Girl, has arranged licensing deals in various territories throughout Europe, says Neil.

Countries such as Spain, Portugal and Germany have responded positively to the debut album's admirable swells of psychedelic tunefulness and rooted melodies, the combined result of

which could easily be the aural lovechild of The Flying Burrito Brothers and My Bloody Valentine.

With a lot of talent and very little ego-driven, yet self-assured, swagger, Brothers Movement approach the coming year with open arms - an appearance on the forthcoming *Other Voices* series won't do them any harm whatsoever. Damn the begrudgers and dislikers of flight cases for leather jackets, they imply.

Rather, embrace the unity of family and the inherent calm of like-minded band members.

"All our influences are relatively similar," says Conor. "There are rarely differences in the songwriting because we all know where we're at. There are no forces pulling us apart."

The Brothers Movement is on release through Rocket Girl. *Other Voices* begins Wed on RTÉ 2 Brothers Movement appear Mar 10

**TONY CLAYTON-LEA**



The philosophy of brothers: Countries such as Spain, Portugal and Germany have responded positively to Brothers Movements' swells of psychedelic tunefulness and rooted melodies. Photograph: Karen Clifford