

## Pale grey



Combining subtle melodies with electronic beats, Pale Grey’s electro-pop is characterised by nifty soundscapes imbued with a melancholic touch. Following the motto “quiet is the new loud”, the Belgian four-piece from Liège / Luik just published their first EP “Put Some Colors” in May last year and has done quite some touring through Europe ever since. We spoke to the first-day founders of the band, Gilles Dewalque and Maxime Lhussier, about their first EP, color-driven inspirations and being part of the JauneOrange Collective.

Photographer PAULINE MIKO    Interview SARAH SCHUG

**You recently published your first EP, “Put some colors”. Happy with the result?**

Yes. It feels great to finally start our discography. It’s our first production and of course just the beginning, but because of it we already met a lot of new people, especially promoters who believed in us and gave us a chance. That gave us energy to work even more.

**Why an EP and not an album?**

It’s just a first start, we wanted to test the waters and not do everything too fast. When we do an album we want to do it the right way – in a real studio, with more people involved and more money. The plan is to release it in about a year from now.

**When were the songs written? Can you tell us more about your creative process?**

We were split between Brussels and Liège at the time so we communicated a lot via internet. We would send each other ideas, the other one would comment on it or add something and send it back again. So all songs are a mix of both of us in the end.

### Where and how did you record?

We recorded the songs in a barn that belongs to Gilles' parents and did almost everything with our computers. We had no real drums for example. It was just the two of us at the time, the others joined later.

### So how did two become four?

It was pretty impossible to play our songs live on stage with only two people. So luckily Ben and Jan joined us.

### You've played a lot of concerts lately, also in Germany and the Netherlands. How were you received and what was your favourite gig?

The crowds are pretty much the same everywhere. Hamburg was weird though, people seemed really bored but afterwards everyone told us how much they liked the show. The best gig was definitely in Frankfurt, in this place that looked like an old squat. It was completely crowded and dirty and people just went crazy. That was cool, especially because we don't have any press in Germany.

### I saw you made a video teaser to promote your EP.

Gilles shot it himself at an old house in the middle of nowhere. He's originally a photographer. We like to work with visuals and want to be in control of everything regarding the band. That's why we work with an overall theme that can be found in all elements of the project – the video, what we wear on stage, the decoration of the instruments, the EP cover...

### What do you talk about in your lyrics? Is it all about personal experiences? I have the impression that you write a lot about personal relationships and love.

We focus on simple themes, we want that people can recognize themselves without being too direct. Recurring subjects are feelings, families, responsibilities, and regrets. In the end you have to feel it in the music, the text is not the essence. We would never write anything political. When we write the songs, the music comes first and the lyrics are added afterwards. We also like the paradox of combining happy music with sad lyrics.

### Most of your songs go quite in the sugary indie pop direction, others have more of an electro sound to them. Why is that and in which direction will you go in the future?

We enjoy mixing different styles and showing some variation. It's a bit like having a bright and a dark side. At the live shows we started to realise that the energetic songs work much better. One of the reasons we didn't do more of this kind was our limited equipment. It's difficult when you only have computers to work with. That's going to be different on our album, we want to make it more powerful.

### What are your influences? Your intro reminds me of The Album Leaf for example. How would you describe your sound?

Yes, we really like The Album Leaf. We listen to a lot of indie bands such as The Whitest Boy Alive or Errors. But we are also quite into post-rock and experimental stuff which influences us a lot. That's what we want to do: Pop/rock with an experimental edge to it.

### What's the story behind your single, "Red"? Is it about a dying friend?

It's about a friend of a friend who killed a friend and weirdly doesn't feel bad about it. Not related to any personal experiences!

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### Let's talk about colours – something we like very much at The Word. Why the band name? It sounds very Belgian in a way.

"Pale Grey" refers to the Belgian sky: We rehearse in the countryside, in the High Fens region, an area where there's fog and mist almost every day. From the barn where we practised we can only see a little window that looks out on the landscape and the greyish fog and mist. Apparently that's the case for almost 200 days a year there.

### What about "Put some colors", the title of your EP?

Our sound was much softer in the beginning. Later we added different elements and spiced it up a little. It's a bit like when you paint and have to fill a blank canvas.

### Everything is color-inspired, even the name of the collective you belong to and all the song titles on your EP. Why is that?

With the name of the label we have nothing to do of course. But Gilles is a photographer and a very visual person, so that's one thing. And we all not only enjoy music but also like to stimulate other senses. We wanted to do a whole artistic project, not just songs. And using colors as a symbol give a lot of room for inspiration and freedom.

### So what do the colors of the song titles symbolise?

The intro we titled "White" because it's like starting out on a white page. "Red" plays with themes as blood and death, it's aggressive. The song "Green" is about someone who has lived in the city for a while and now wants to move back to the countryside, go back to the roots. Interestingly we first wrote the songs and then chose the titles.

### The collective you're part of is also based on a color. Where does the name JauneOrange come from?

Apparently one of the founders of the collective had an apartment with a room brightly colored in yellow and orange.

### To continue with the color symbolism: The music industry also has some grey areas, I'm thinking of illegal downloading for instance. How do you experience this, are these developments counterproductive or helpful?

It probably helps more than it hinders. It's good especially for new bands. Everyone in the world has the possibility to listen to our stuff. The internet makes it easy to be discovered but it also makes it harder to stay and have a lasting impact. And you just can't earn money with making albums anymore!

### How has it helped you to be part of the JauneOrange Collective?

Just being able to use their name already helps a lot. We get a lot of advice, are included in their newsletters and they also book our gigs.

### How are the relations with the other bands?

It's like a big family. Almost everyone is from Liège, we rehearse in the same place, play shows together, go to each others concerts... it's a small artistic community. And a lot of musicians are involved in several different JauneOrange projects, as Ben who also plays with Hollywood Porn Stars.

### What do you guys do when you don't play with the band?

Gilles organises exhibitions for a cultural centre, Max does press work and booking for JauneOrange, Ben works as an engineer and Jan studies literature.

### And who would you really like to open for one day? What has been your favourite so far?

We really enjoyed playing with Syd Matters. But our favourite would definitely be 13 & God.

Pale Grey's latest EP, "Put Some Colors", came out on JauneOrange in May 2011.

[myspace.com/palegreymusic](http://myspace.com/palegreymusic)