

Clouds Hill

a Clouds Hill Artist Bio

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Wargirl (USA)

Two Track: **Arbolita & Little Girl**

EP: **Arbolita**

Release: **29.06.2018**

Album: **21.09.2018**



Long Beach, Southern California. Whilst nearby Los Angeles is where dreams are shattered, in Long Beach people are getting on with their lives. It's got a strong working class community and is known for its ethnic diversity. Add to that the sunshine and the fabulous beach. "Really," Matt Wignall says, "Long Beach is what Los Angeles is trying to be: a cosmopolitan and creative sort of place."

Wignall has been living there for years, runs a studio, seeks out old equipment to repair and prides himself in making it sound better than it ever did before. He produces bands, such as Cold War Kids. With them, Wignall has recorded tracks such as "Hang Me Out to Dry" and "Hospital Beds" with a sound that is to die for. So the interesting question is: Why does a musician who has such an understanding of sound and such awesome equipment not have his own band?

And now he has got one: **WARGIRL**. After brilliant first gigs, for example at the Clouds Hill Festival in Germany, their first EP "**Arbolita**" is coming out on the Hamburg-based label Clouds Hill: six tracks straddling funk, dub, disco, garage rock and afrobeat. All fabulously played, and sensationally produced by Wignall.

"I knew I was capable of recording and writing good music. But the idea of being in some band where there's four guys playing and one of them singing lead just seemed incredibly boring to me," Wignall says. He likes listening to Santana's early records, afrobeat recordings by Fela Kuti, the psychedelic masterpiece "Forever Changes" by Love, the 70s psych funk masters War (who happen to also be from Long Beach!), as well as reggae, disco, garage rock and post-punk. "One day the thought occurred to me that really what I should do was to get to know people and set up a band with them that would combine all of these aspects." So he went out, into town, down to the beach – and realised: Actually, I already know all of these people, I just need to ask them.

The singer is Samantha Parks. She is the daughter of James Lafayette Parks, the leader of the 70s funk band Bull & The Matadors, but above all she is a gifted vocalist who manages both to sing sensually and to drive the sound forwards. Tamara Raye plays bass in a way that is unusually demanding and that grooves like Tina Weymouth's (of the Talking Heads and Tom Tom Club). Enya Preston plays the keyboards. There are also, very importantly, two

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percussionists: Erick Diego Nieto and Jeff Suri blend disco with funk, latin with afro, pop with rock – but always to the point, never just to show off. Matt Wignall plays guitar, “not at all as a lead instrument but as an additional driver.”

Looking at the band one immediately notices: The make-up of this band also makes a socio-political statement. There are three women and three men, each with colourful biographies, and they are playing music that is from all over the world, yet could only have been invented in California. “We stand for Long Beach,” Wignall says. “If you walk through this town, you will meet a hundred people who could also have played in this band.” **WARGIRL** knows that the situation elsewhere in the US is totally different. “That’s why we want to take a stand, want to show: There are still people who are different, who are open and not interested in commerce. We’re still here!” **WARGIRL’s** music doesn’t carry clear messages. “First and foremost, the songs should be fun and make you dance,” Wignall says. But there is another layer hiding behind this. “It’s like The Clash. They could be consumed as a party band – but also as a source of information for revolutionary thoughts.”

“**Arbolita**”, the title song of the EP, works as sublime garage funk, but behind that there is an appeal to the Latin community to hang on in there and not to give up. “Our percussionist Erick lived in this country for 30 years before he finally got Permanent Residence last winter,” Wignall says. “He went to school, worked, paid taxes here – yet on paper he was illegal.” “**People**” is a pick-me-up for a society that is sometimes lethargic. It’s an appeal to get active, both mentally and physically – and with such a fantastic funk beat that really should be no problem. “**Little Girl**” takes us to the disco, not to the upmarket trendy ones but to the kind of small joints where the DJ puts on Blondie and New Order after Chaka Khan and Rod Stewart. “**Uptown Girls (Song for Domino)**” is a testament to **WARGIRL’s** love of reggae, which incidentally is also where the band took its name from. Wignall explains: “On Max Romeo’s album ‘WAR INA BABYLON’ the cover shows an impressive drawing of a girl suffering the effects of war.” Two words got hooked in his head: war, girl. **WARGIRL**.

With this EP, summer has found its soundtrack: The party is getting political – the music’s sounding both old and new at the same time; it’s enticing you out into the sun whilst warning you not to take any of that for granted. Enjoy!

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