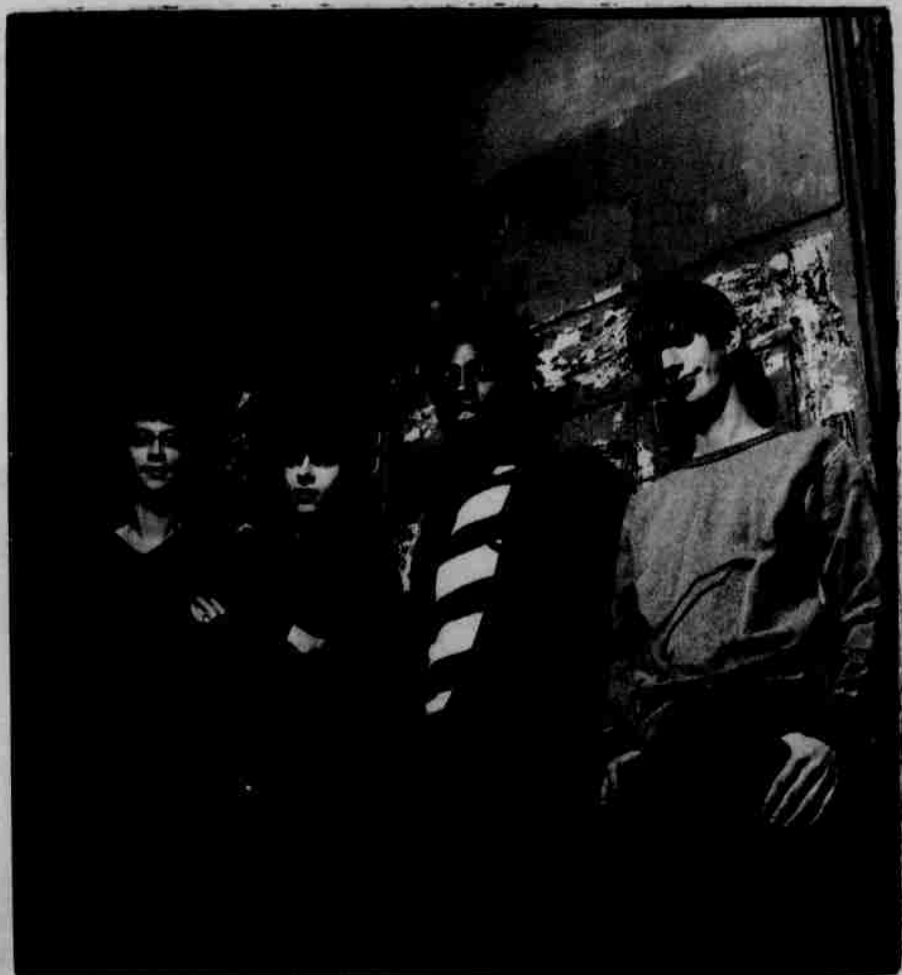


blocparty



Gordon Moakes (second from left) joined school pals Kele Okereke and Russell Lissack (second from right and far right) and drummer Matt Tong, and an international sensation was formed.

RODNEY WILSON | CIN WEEKLY CONTRIBUTOR

You've no doubt heard Bloc Party, even if you've never heard of Bloc Party.

The British band's songs are seemingly ubiquitous to the television-watching experience, with tracks popping up on shows such as *The O.C.*, *Smallville* and *Grey's Anatomy*. The group's songs have provided the aural backdrop for commercials from companies including Saturn. And the band has been a steady presence on indie music charts since the release of its debut album, 2005's *Silent Alarm*.

Now touring to support its follow-up

album, *A Weekend in the City*, the band remains focused on the music despite rising expectations and increasing exposure.

SCHOOL CHUMS AND SMASH HITS

Bloc Party first formed in Essex, England, the result of scheming school friends and a passion for music.

"Kele and Russell were friends from school who had kind of planned to form a band," says bassist Gordon Moakes, referring to frontman Kele Okereke and lead guitarist Russell Lissack. "This is maybe over 10 years ago."

Eventually adding Moakes and settling

Bassist Gordon Moakes tells us how two school friends became rock stars

on Matt Tong to play drums, Bloc Party recorded and released *Silent Alarm*. With its New Wave-tinged pop songs filled with angular guitars and tight, danceable rhythms, the album catapulted the band from Essex school friends to international rock stars.

For many bands, the distractions that come with success spell ultimate doom, but the members of Bloc Party managed to keep themselves focused on the music.

"We were able to kind of take the band forwards (because of) the financial input that came from that," Moakes explains. "And what it really did was sort of galvanize us to be a bit more serious about the music. Now when we write songs and go into the studio, we're more tuned in to that idea of really pushing ourselves into new areas. It gave us a green flag to go for it, I suppose."

A WEEKEND IN THE CITY

Following up a smash success debut is never easy – the term "sophomore slump" often gets bandied about when a band starts talking about its second album. But on *A Weekend in the City*, Bloc Party didn't try to recapture the sound of its debut.

"I don't think we thought about it until later," Moakes says of expectations their debut had created for them. "When we'd been touring, I can remember we'd spent most of that time on the road, and it occupied all of our time. And when we came back, we realized it was going to be a big deal, but I don't think we shied away from that, and I think the pressure to make a better record was what really pushed us forward in the end."

The songs follow a loose timeline, from the beginning of the weekend to morning's post-party crash, and they

JUST THE FACTS

WHAT: Bloc Party, with Smoosh and Deerhoof

WHEN: 8 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 26

WHERE: Madison Theater, 730 Madison Ave., Covington

PRICE: \$20

PARKING: On street

CONTACT: 859-491-2444, www.madisontheateronline.com or www.blocparty.com

THE SCUFFLING DIVA INCIDENT

Everybody knows Madonna, right? Well, no ... at least one man doesn't recognize her. The Material Girl showed up at the door of Bloc Party's Live Aid dressing room earlier this year and, not being recognized by the group's tour manager, was dragged out by security. According to the band, the diva was put into a headlock at one point, eliciting violent threats from the superstar against the guards.

capture scenes ranging from energetic to hedonistic to contemplative. The title really does say it all.

"I suppose it's quite plain, in a way – that was the way to do it justice," Moakes says. "We did talk about if there was another way of putting it, and I don't think any of us could come up with a way that would sum it up better. Because it would completely change the impact of the record to call it something abstract and then expect the songs to deliver a kind of message. Once we'd settled on that, it created a kind of framework to let the songs speak for themselves."

With a new album in the works and more touring ahead, Bloc Party is poised to let its songs speak for many years to come.