

# STYROFOAM

A THOUSAND WORDS  
JUNE 10, 2008



**A THOUSAND WORDS** is the sixth album for indie/electro pop artist **Styrofoam**. It is also the first for Nettwerk, and **Styrofoam** creator Arne Van Petegem is audibly excited about his new worldwide home.

"They have a very forward-thinking way of handling the digital revolution and the online world," he says. "A lot of stuff that classic record companies seem to be scared of, they seem to be fully embracing. I think that's actually one of the main reasons I decided to go with Nettwerk. It all feels like **Styrofoam** phase two in a very big, big way!"

**Styrofoam** phase one found the project coming to international acclaim after joining the roster of Berlin-based Morr Music in 2000. Working with the label afforded the Antwerp, Belgium-based producer an active participating role in the burgeoning Berlin scene, which was then hybridizing indie rock with experimental electronics. He also cross-pollinated with collaborations with fellow Morr artists like the **Notwist** and **Lali Puna** and remixed other artists such as **Jimmy Eat World** (which he's toured with), **The Postal Service** and **Death Cab For Cutie**.

Phase two eschews previous methods of what he calls "bedroom producing" in favor of a fresh approach. Breaking the mold from previous **Styrofoam** albums, which were self-produced, **A THOUSAND WORDS** enlisted the guidance of **WAX LTD** (Wally Gagel and Xandy Berry), a Los Angeles production team with some pretty varied credits ranging from **Sebadoh**

and **Tanya Donelly** to **The Eels** and **Folk Implosion**—and even the **Backstreet Boys** and **Jessica Simpson**. That experience with both indie rock and pop was something Van Petegem found very attractive.

"It's very hard to find someone that's familiar with indie rock on the one hand, and programmed beats and software on the other, so I think that combination really ended up working for me," he explains. "And I definitely wanted to challenge myself musically. Everything until now I more or less made entirely by myself, and now I deliberately wanted to have someone else involved in the final process of arranging and mixing the record and getting it in its final form. We were on the same page so much that it really felt like one person."

The album features a diverse yet cohesive array of guest vocalists, like **Jimmy Eat World's Jim Adkins** (who shines on the rose-colored "My Next Mistake"), **Blake Hazard** (a indie-pop singer gone digital on "Microscope") and **Josh Rouse** (offering a brief memoir of otherness in "Lil White Boy"). But the star vocalist on the album is Van Petegem himself, who has grown out of the, as he puts it, "shy electronic guy afraid of singing" to return to his roots singing in indie rock bands. He sounds relaxed and joyful as he delivers bright, multi-layered harmonies and simple, thought-provoking lyrics.

"I basically wanted to make an uptempo pop album with big choruses to sing along to. I sort of figured I'd made enough sulky midtempo music for the rest of my life...I do, however, think a lot of the production techniques and electronic sounds I'm using add some 'edge' to the album musically. I'm very interested in presenting all these weird sounds, bleeps etc. in a package that is quite accessible overall. But when you listen a little deeper, there is still a lot there to discover.

"Not to dis my previous output," he laughs, "but I often ended up with depressing tracks, and a lot of times the sounds and the sonics of the whole thing could maybe even interrupt the ideas behind the songs. Now I think the ideas are very present and the vocals are very present; that's also a big change for me. I think now there is a very strong and clear sound."

And every second is worth a thousand words.

[www.myspace.com/styrofoam](http://www.myspace.com/styrofoam)

