

# DEFIANCE, OHIO

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You might be surprised to read that Defiance, Ohio started life under a different name as a 'funk post-rock' two piece in late 2002. Will and Ryan played bass and drums respectively, in front of a video projection; it was all 'very artistic', Will says, sniggering, but a far cry from the singalong banjo-ripping anarchist punk that propelled them around a six week European tour this October. Four years later the funk has gone and replacing it are lyrics about Iraq, the American prison-industrial complex and skateboarding, accompanied by unexpected instruments including a cello, fiddle, harmonica and banjo.

I interviewed most of the band with a shit tape recorder after their gig at the Klondyke Bowls Club in Manchester, which was the last date of their tour. Their set that night was brilliant; the sheer depth of the sound of six people playing can't fail to be impressive and every song made me want to dance. My favourite song was 'I Don't Want Solidarity...', because I can't hear it without remembering listening to it on repeat in my tent at Climate Camp last August, the night before a day of action which was always going to end in arrest. 'Let's stop this talk of action, 'cos action comes easy, it's the moments just before that are hard, when I've got to get my voice and my fists on the same page as my heart', my chest hammering in anticipation, trying to sleep. Looking at the faces of other people watching the band at the gig, I realised that for every Defiance, Ohio song, there's someone standing there like I was, listening with their eyes closed, the words resonating and conjuring up times, places and people. And that's pretty much what you want music to do, isn't it?

LH: Do you consider Defiance, Ohio a folk punk band?

Theo: I would almost say no. It's a weird question to answer because I think that if you think about when we play a show – the amount of equipment

that is required for us to play a show.

Sherry: I'm always really happy, though, when just by chance we end up having to play an acoustic show. I think it's nice that we have the versatility to do that, even though we usually put the instruments through such small amplifications.

LH: You were saying before, Theo, about associating folk with acoustic instruments. What do you think folk music is, I mean, do you think it has an ethic underlying it or is it as superficial as relying on acoustic instruments?

T: When I think of folk music I think more of being super versatile in where you can perform and how much planning it takes for you to play. It's a lot simpler. Acoustic instrumentation doesn't define it at all, it's also a matter of specifics.

Geoff: To me at least part of folk music is that the songs are kind of second to the performance, or what they document stands by itself more. The cultural time and place and the things that people are dealing with that the songs refer to. Folk music tends to have that feeling of reflecting the culture really strongly.

LH: I suppose you could see that in the way that folk songs are passed on between performers, and it doesn't matter if the song's a cover.

Will: I really like songs like that. Have you ever heard the song, 'Rock Island Line'? Johnny Cash sang it, Leadbelly sang it, all these people sang it and each time it was a little bit different. Sometimes people would add something to it, but it's really nobody's song.

LH: Do you see a natural connection between folk music and punk music, or do you think that its taken a few creative people to push them together?

T: I definitely see a connection between the two things. I see both folk music and punk music as being more urgent and real. It's more about making these songs and sharing them with as many

