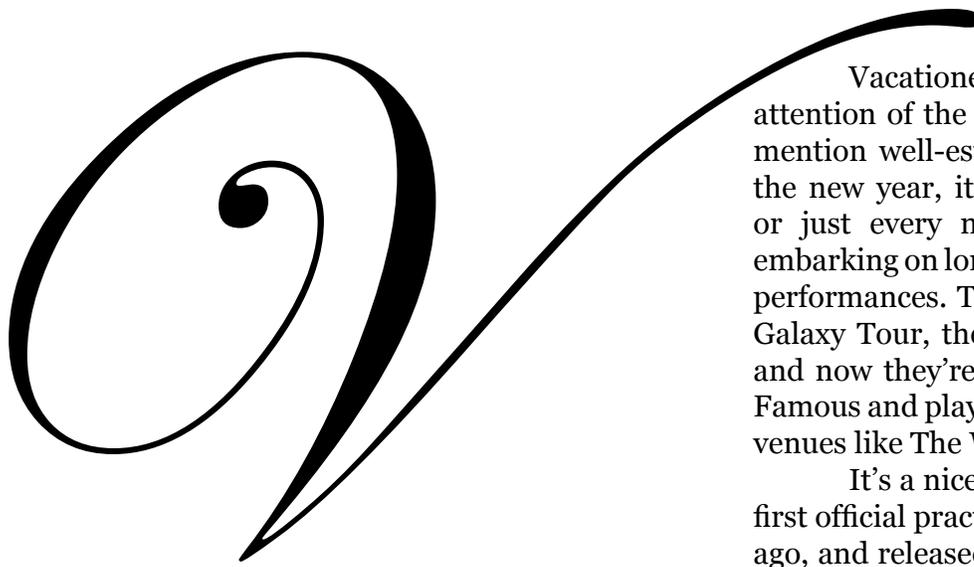
A person is shown in silhouette, looking out of a window. The window has a wire mesh. The background is bright and slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting. The text 'Vacationeer' is written in a large, elegant, black cursive font across the upper part of the image. Below it, the text 'THE BEST OF WHAT'S NEXT' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

Vacationeer

THE BEST OF WHAT'S NEXT



Vacationer's sound has also grabbed the attention of the Internet and radio stations, not to mention well-established, headlining acts. "Before the new year, it was just a show every few weeks or just every month," Vasoli says. Now they're embarking on long stretches that demand near-daily performances. They recently toured with Asteroids Galaxy Tour, then headed to South By Southwest, and now they're on the road with The Naked And Famous and playing to sold-out crowds at legendary venues like The Wiltern in Los Angeles.

It's a nice start for a band that conducted its first official practice in May of 2011, less than a year ago, and released its debut album, *Gone*, just a few weeks ago. "Just mentally, I really can't expect that kind of stuff," Vasoli says. "I've been doing music for a really long time, and I've definitely learned not to count any chickens. But I kind of look at it like I have this lottery ticket, and I'm just really hoping that there's something to it."

But unlike a lottery ticket, this success was not purchased. Luck may have played a part, but luck alone can't induce dancing from intoxicated barflies well past midnight. The band's modest success so far has been earned. Vasoli has been creating music and playing in bands since middle school, dabbling in pop-punk and ska. But none of it really grabbed a foothold. "I could never really find my thing," he says. "I was always just experimenting with different things... going in all different directions."

Eventually he began writing with *Gone* producers and members of Body Language, Matthew Young and Grant Wheeler, both of whom are heavily into the electronic scene. Vasoli had been enjoying what he calls the "surface" of that genre, but the two producers pushed him deeper, exposing him to house and dub-step, trip-hop and experimentalism. "I got extremely enlightened," says Vasoli. He picked up new influences like Aphex Twin and Ratatat, even Jaga Jazzist and instrumental hip-hop artists like J Dilla.

His breadth of knowledge and familiarity with electronic music deepened, and then combined with his readily established appreciation of modern acts like Beach House and The Radio Dept. "Real guitars and vocals over top of little organ drum machines and stuff like that," he says.

That's not to discount older artists, either. "There's—it may be weird to say—but even a barbershop feel to what we do," he explains. "We got turned onto stuff like The Andrews Sisters and this band called The Free Design from the '60s that were

Hometown: Philadelphia

Members: Kenny Vasoli (vocals, bass), Greg Altman (guitar), Michael Mullin (vibraphone, keys, and trigger finger), Ryan Zimmaro (drums)

Album: *Gone*

For Fans Of: Vampire Weekend, Dale Earnhardt Jr. Jr., Lord Huron

by Nathan Spicer

It's 1 a.m. in this muggy Austin bar, and Vacationer is just beginning to set up their equipment as the SXSW attendees who'd gathered to see Class Actress are dissipating, leaving a scarce population of late-night stragglers. A ring of patrons huddle around the bar, as the dance floor stands mostly empty.

Vacationer launches into its island-tinged electro-pop, or as the band jokingly called it while recording the album, "Nu-hula." The live vocals and instruments are mixed with electronic beats and samples of light-hearted, Pacific island sounds created far from the middle of Texas. In come plinks and plunks of electric guitars and ukuleles, the wide whistle of woodwinds, galloping toms and four-on-the-floor beats. The flow of traffic reverses as curious music fans trickle in. Quickly forgetting the hour and all the energy they've already expended during some of the hundreds of earlier SXSW shows and that they're tired, hungry and half-drunk, they start dancing. By the time Vacationer finishes its set, the floor is packed again. "That's the dream," Kenny Vasoli—the band's lead singer, co-songwriter and bassist—later says. "It was a really, really cool experience."

all just crazy vocal-pop aficionados.”

But for Vasoli and company to find their true sound, it took vital ingredients from faraway places—places that that didn’t sound like the harshly cold streets of Philadelphia, from which Vacationer unexpectedly hails, or the precise timing of Detroit’s underground instrumental hip-hop.

They needed something warm, something inviting, something tropical. Vasoli had begun listening to music with tropical feels and voiced his admiration of the twinkling guitars and relaxed rhythms to his bandmates. He was delighted to hear there was plenty of those sounds they could sample.

Vacationer had discovered the islands.

The song “Trip” adeptly channels a Polynesian feel while keeping the electronic and pop elements intact. Slips of soft static appear throughout, like a radio sitting by a sunbather on the beach, while the high whistle of a gibbon occasionally echoes from the rainforest background into the fore. Meanwhile, a trip-hop beat propels the song forward, guitars warble into space and reverb shades Vasoli’s tenor. It all coalesces into a relaxed pop groove that contains enough energetic eccentricity to keep listeners intrigued.

YouTube put the music video for “Trip”—showcasing a man break-dancing by a waterfall, which was inspired by the film *The White Diamond* by Werner Herzog—on its main music page. Blogs noticed it shortly thereafter, then Downtown Records, who ended up signing the band.

College and public radio stations followed suit, adding a number of Vacationer songs into rotation. “There’s a radio station called WXPB,” says Vasoli, “that’s a member-supported station in the Philly area that I just love. My mom called me the other day and told me she heard [‘Dreamlike’] on there.”

With heavy production values, it would seem Vacationer’s sound would work better in recorded environments, but they adeptly transport nu-hula to the stage. Vasoli and the band (Ryan Zimmaro on drums, Greg Altman on guitar, and Michael Mullin on vibraphone, keys and trigger finger), can basically reproduce the entire catalog of album sounds. “[Mike will] live-sample stuff on the spot,” says Vasoli, “and there’s also extraneous trippy sounds that we have going on top of it. Also, Ryan has what’s called an SPD, which is basically a MIDI percussion pad...We’re sampling so much, and there’s so much real stuff...We try to make it hard to pinpoint who’s doing what.”

They’re also comfortable playing stripped-down sets like they did on the podcast *Sklarbro Country*, hosted by comedians/twins Jason and Randy Sklar, who approached Vacationer right after the aforementioned SXSW performance and asked them to sit in on a recording session. Because Vacationer have the ability to perform with or without much electrical input, they’re on their way to achieving their half-serious goal. “The whole motive with this band [is] trying to play in exotic places and stay in warm climates and work in endless summer,” Vasoli says with an audible smile. The group is rather fascinated by Don Ho’s career, which allowed him to play in front of copious crowds while staying on the island. Vasoli would like to “do the nu-electro version of that.”

But for now, they’re enjoying the ride through continental U.S. climates. Their expectations have already been exceeded in a relatively short period of time. “The fact that [*Gone*] is getting any kind of attention at all, it’s kind of indescribable how happy it makes me,” Vasoli says. “I feel like I have a new lease on life these days.”

Even though Vacationer’s dreams of permanent bleach-white beaches have yet to come true, those of us obligatorily landlocked still have Vacationer to take us away—for a little while, anyway. Even if it’s 1 a.m. in a muggy bar, and we’re tired, hungry and half-drunk.

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how happy it makes me...
I feel like I have a new lease
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