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The Horrors, The Horrors

You won't have ever seen, or heard, a band quite like The Horrors.

Touted in 2006 as one of the UK's hottest new acts, they've just released a debut album that's nothing like the genero-indie of their contemporaries.

Despite the number of column inches they have accumulated, from an interview with The Daily Telegraph to the front cover of new music bible the NME, they have little in common with the likes of Arctic Monkeys or Razorlight.

Indeed, singer Faris Badwan recently described touring partners The Automatic as one of the worst bands he'd ever heard. "As people though, the two I've spoken to seem really nice," he concedes.

The Horrors' recently released debut album *Strange House* is a collection of densely layered songs that veer from surf rock to garage punk, by way of an ominous sounding Vox Continental organ. Easy listening it ain't. Yet the record still managed to edge its way into the top 40.

It takes a bit of effort to get into The Horrors, doesn't it?

"Definitely," says Badwan, without hesitation. "I think we're seeing how far we can go with it. No matter how many people come to see us, we're not going to get much major radio airplay and we'll never be as big as The Strokes or Franz Ferdinand but it's not important to us, really."

Dickensian goths

"We always knew exactly what we wanted to do," he continues. "We literally had two rehearsals in the space of a week and then we played our first show. We always knew what we wanted to sound like. We always looked like the way we did."

Their peculiarly Dickensian goth appearance is as far removed from the T-shirt and trainers-clad look of most indie bands as it's possible to conceive. But Badwan insists that The Horrors' uniform, far from being contrived, instead "just sort of naturally evolved".

"We didn't create an image, this is what we looked like before," he says. "It's hindered us as much as it's helped us. It all balances out."

The band, which also features the superbly-named likes of Joshua Von Grimm and Coffin Joe, formed in the Essex seaside resort of Southend. "It's just like a grey wasteland," maintains Badwan of his hometown.

"There's nothing there. When you're in an environment as creatively dead as Southend, you react against it because you just want to get out."

The 6ft 6in singer admits the band's success: "Has gone beyond anything that I would have thought. We never even thought about putting a record out."

Indeed, there's no denying that The Horrors polarise audiences. Was that always the band's intention? "Yes, but not for the sake of making people hate us," says Badwan. "As far as I'm concerned, that's just what great music does."

The Horrors' debut album Strange House is out now. The band are touring the UK until 12 April.

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