

California Wives

"I felt like I was asleep for years," says California Wives' lead vocalist / keyboardist Jayson Kramer of his decision in 2009 to leave behind a promising career in medicine for a professional go at music. Jayson's first experience with music began at age 6, playing classical piano up until he was 16. Along the way he started writing songs as hobby, taking influence from bands like The Smashing Pumpkins and Oasis, and later electronic music such as Autechre and Aphex Twin. The hobby continued through his undergrad years at Boston University as a pre-med student until, *"a weird thing happened when I finished my MCAT and all the studying stopped. I was completely honest with myself for the first time in my life and recognized that I had no desire to go on medical school. This is when I took a more serious turn toward music, which is something I realized I should have been doing all along."* Around this time he moved back to his hometown of Chicago where he was introduced to drummer Joe O'Connor and bassist Dan Zima, who had been playing together since high school.

Joe and Dan's musical influences followed a similar path to Jayson's, beginning with alternative rock and arriving at a strong appreciation of electronic music, more specifically bands that mixed synthetic and traditional instruments like New Order and the Cure. It was via this shared appreciation of music and compatible chemistry that California Wives was formed in 2009, with the current lineup being cemented in 2012 upon the new addition of lead guitarist Graham Masell. For the band's debut album, Art History, they worked with producer Claudius Mittendorfer (Interpol, Neon Indian, Wild Nothings) in NYC. When asked about recording Dan said, *"my favorite thing about doing the album with Claudius was how he pushed us to try everything with these songs that we felt we knew so well. Any sound, any part, any rearranging of a song section, when we were skeptical about something he'd convince us to try it out, and most of the time it would turn out great."*

For the eleven tracks that comprise their debut, Jayson is quick to point out that, *"songwriting is always the most important thing for us as a band. You can talk about vibe and style but if you don't have solid songs you're wasting people's time."* He goes on to say that thematically the album, *"comes from a relatable place of losing one's youth,"* highlighting tracks like "Marianne," "23" and "Blood Red Youth" for their focus on that topic: *"a lot of our songs are about getting older because that's something we are all familiar with in one way or another. You want to go back to the way things were, but life is changing and people are too."*

One person who's taken notice of the band's sound is Joy Division / New Order's Peter Hook who appointed California Wives to open his headlining set with The Light at Chicago's Metro Cabaret. Other memorable appearances include 2011's North Coast Music and Tomorrow Never Knows festivals, the Taste of Chicago, and the Wicker Park Fest. Local press has not been shy either, the Chicago Tribune calling the band one to watch in 2011 and stating California Wives' 2010 EP Affair "will tempt even the most reluctant wallflower."

After a formative performance at the SXSW Billboard Official Showcase in 2011, national outlets started taking notice, with Pitchfork stating "Chicago new wave aesthetes California Wives caught our ears" and My Old Kentucky Blog firmly declaring "This could be the next buzz band everyone is talking about..."

California Wives debut album, Art History, will be available September 4, 2012 through Vagrant Records.

California Wives is:

Jayson Kramer - Lead Vocals, Keyboard and Rhythm Guitar

Dan Zima - Bass

Joe O'Connor - Drums

Graham Masell - Lead Guitar