



Interview by James Gaden

**With a mix of nationalities and musical influences, Dorja are an all female Rock band looking to bring something different to the table. Their new album 'Gemini' is their first statement of intent, with the band releasing it on June 21st, the last day of the sun's transit of the astrological sign. Fireworks talked to founder Anna Mylee to hear about the group's fortunes.**

**You've got members scattered all over the place, so how did the band get together?**

I came from Belgium and studied and lived in the UK for about five years and then I went to LA for a year. That's where I met our singer Aiym, she was living over there but she's from Kazakhstan. I had previously been in a band with Rosie and so I decided to form a new band with Rosie and Aiym. I knew right away Aiym had to be the singer because she's incredible. Becky and I met on the road while I was touring the UK, so that's how we all got together. We had Holly as well but she left and we brought in Sarah on guitar instead. That was the main thing, making sure we had the right people.

**Were you aiming for a specific type of group when you formed the band?**

I had in mind something like The Darkness, I wanted to blend Classic Hard Rock with Glam Rock. Me, Rosie and Holly all used to listen to bands like Guns N' Roses and we thought it would be great to put together a project to share that inspiration. When we started writing, Sarah brought in some Blues guitar which made things more interesting. Aiym had a more Pop outlook with her lyric writing and was a big Janis Joplin fan, so that was another element. I just let my Led Zeppelin, John Bonham vibe take over and Becky is all about Heavy Metal, so all those influences mixed and we just let it grow. The results are the album you have now, where I think we have dark stuff, mellow stuff, some Glam and Hard Rock, which we love. We thought it made us a bit different and we called the album 'Gemini' to signify different sides to the same thing.

**You mentioned John Bonham there, was he your inspiration to take up the drums?**

My parents are both into Rock music, my dad into more Prog and my mum into Classic Rock so I grew up with that, but the man who made me want to play the drums was actually Dave Grohl. When I saw him he looked so much fun compared to others I'd seen. As I studied I discovered Jeff Porcaro, and then I found people were comparing my laid back snare style to John Bonham, which I'd never even considered. Of course I loved Led Zeppelin but I never really studied Bonham until people mentioned that. That was when I started paying real attention to his groove and his solos – then I was hooked!

**What's the story behind the band name?**

It's really tough to find a cool name that's not already taken! (laughs) I'm interested in Buddhism, Tibetan philosophy and things like that and you find words, there's one called 'Dorje' which means indestructible, powerful. I thought it was good and then I found it was already taken! So one of the girls said "Put an A on the end instead, make it female". We then discovered that is also a word, which means "indestructible body" in Buddhism, so I thought "Here we go, that's pretty cool!" and we went with it.

**It must be tough for rehearsals and writing with you all being far apart?**

We really only see each other twice a year, usually in two or three week blocks because it involves a tour, so it's busy. While we're together we have to do videos and photos and promotional things, plus songwriting as well. So we might spend a week doing that and then two weeks touring. It's tough to write together – we start by sharing files across the internet. Half of the songs were written with half the band in London and then me and Aiym did the rest in LA. We only get together to finish the song when we're sure we have it, because we only see each other a couple of times a year. Although one time when we were together we managed to write three songs in one day. We were all on the same page, there was no ego and they came very quickly.

So we don't get a lot of rehearsal time, not as much as we'd like. It's a bit like a long distance relationship. It can be hard being apart for so long but when we do see each other it's so good and so intense, we just get together and the rest of the world doesn't exist. We're booking dates right now for a tour, we're hoping to do some UK shows, looking at the big cities like London, Manchester, Newcastle, the usual suspects. We're trying to get a week's worth.

**You've done this all independently, without a label?**

Yes, we're only working with label services, like Absolute, people we trust. They're amazing. We had a few label replies but nothing we felt was right. So for this one we're doing it ourselves. We don't necessarily want to keep it that way, but right now we have complete control because it's just me and Rosie doing everything. We have no management, no label, it's all us. Hopefully this album does well enough that we can change that.

**While the attitude toward female Rock groups has certainly softened over the years, have you found there is still a problem with acceptance?**

I'd be lying if I said we weren't treated differently, but it's not always in a bad way, so it's a blessing and a curse. We make clear from the outset, we ended up being an all female band by accident, it's a bit like all the great all male bands out there, I don't think they got together with an idea of "Guys, let's form an all male Rock group!" They're mates and they got together to make music, just like us. The only member we deliberately picked for their gender was Aiym because we all agreed we wanted a female singer as that gives you a certain sound. We don't present ourselves as an *all female band*, we're just a *band*.

We do have people that won't take us seriously, we've had some comments like "Oh, I expected you to be awful but you're actually okay"... We've had people ask if we were really playing our instruments or just miming. So I guess we actually really impressed these guys and they wanted to tell us – while being extremely sexist at the same time. (laughs)