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By ANDY BATTAGLIA



Richard Beaven for The Wall Street Journal

Aron Sanchez and Arone Dyer of the group Buke and Gase.

Ordering hot chocolate is serious business in idyllic Hudson, N.Y., or at least it is for the two former Brooklynites transplanted there under the guise of the crafty—and decidedly cracked—indie-rock band Buke and Gase.

"It's a very important part of the day," said Arone Dyer, before commencing upon her upstate ritual at the Chocolate Bar, a charming home for foodstuffs on Hudson's main strip, Warren Street.

She knew what she wanted. Her specs at the counter: "super-spicy, super-chocolate-y Mexican hot chocolate, no whipped cream, just dark and sexy."

The Buke and Gase way of life is nothing if not inclined toward customization. The peculiar band name owes to instruments of the duo's own invention: the "buke," a modified baritone ukulele made to sound appealingly gritty and strange, and the "gase," a hybrid of guitar and bass outfitted with braying strings from both. Ms. Dyer

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and Aron Sanchez devised their tools of art while in search of a sound that would be unusual and all their own.

"It opens up different possibilities and different limitations," said Mr. Sanchez, the world's foremost gase player and also a sometime instrument-builder for the New York theatrical troupe Blue Man Group. "It's good for filling out the whole frequency spectrum."

The sound of Buke and Gase was born in 2007 in Brooklyn and began emigrating by way of a hand-packaged EP and a hectic, herky-jerky debut album, "Riposte," in 2010.

Last year, the duo resettled the project upstate to work on their new album, "General Dome," which is due out next week. Two hours north of the city by train, Hudson—in an area that has come to be known, for better and worse, as "Williamsburg on the Hudson"—proved more than accommodating.

Continuing down Warren Street, as often happens, the pair bumped into a fellow artist friend. "He makes these wild things out of old industrial machinery," Mr. Sanchez said. They were headed for a tiny clapboard building decorated on the outside with fantastical paintings of trees. It is there where Ms. Dyer, who is 32, lives in a two-story apartment for \$500 a month. She also has a large backyard, with a clear view of the nearby art-house cinema and ample space for a hammock to swing.

"It's pretty awesome," she said. Inside, a bottle of homemade mead sat in a windowsill, distilling. "It's the nectar of the gods, just whiskey and some honey and some water. It's got another two weeks to go."

The next stop was the home of Mr. Sanchez, who is 40 and began his stay in Hudson part-time before relocating there permanently 2½ years ago. "It's nice to have the connection still, but the city is less enticing now," he said. "Being up here you get so much more done. In the city, you have three things to do in a day and that's as much as you can manage. Here, it's 2 p.m. and I'm like, 'I've done everything I need to do today.'"

He and Ms. Dyer conceived parts of "General Dome," an album full of manic energy and meticulous enthusiasm, in his standalone yellow house, with a working fireplace and a woodshop out back. With sketches for songs in mind, they set up to record in Basilica Hudson, a 19th-century factory building reconstituted as an enterprising arts space.

"It was a rabbit-hide glue factory," Mr. Sanchez said. "It also processed hot dogs."

Now, the Basilica plays home to eclectic events and large-scale cultural projects of a kind on the rise in Hudson. The world-renowned artist Marina Abramovic is plotting an ambitious performance-art venue here, and word of the town's allure has trickled down the river.

Mr. Sanchez called all the attention "a source of mixed feelings" for locals. But Hudson still makes for an embracing home for Buke and Gase, whose music abounds in homespun charm but, also, the kind of visceral thrill that attends creation concocted on the fly. In addition to duties on their namesake instruments, the duo make a wild percussive racket via drums and bells played with their feet (see: the "toe-bourine").

"There's something challenging and exciting about saying, 'Oh, I don't know if I'll be able to play that part, but I'm going to try,'" Ms. Dyer said. "I've got two feet and two hands, and I want to see how many different things they can do."

Melding those appendages with the possibilities intrinsic to machines has been a

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big part of the Buke and Gase project, musically and otherwise. For transportation, Ms. Dyer recently procured a cherished new treasure: a black Kawasaki Ninja motorcycle.

"I cut the windshield down and took these really terrible flame decals off of it," she said. It gets her around town, and expands on a fascination she formerly fostered as a bicycle mechanic in the city. "I've gotten up to 100 miles an hour on the Taconic [Parkway] late at night. It's the best!"

It also serves a practical purpose: "I have to go to the grocery store, which is not in town—and to get to the city, I don't want to take the train all the time."

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