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MAD
WORLD

SEAN GUITAR LOTTIE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEX FREUND
/ ACHARD & ASSOCIATES

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STUDIO/ SANBOX STUDIOS
SPECIAL THANKS/ PHIL CARAWAY AT SANDBOX STUDIOS.



CHARLOTTE WEARS NECKLACES BY LAZARO & MADE HER THINK, HEADRESS BY NORISOL FERRARI SEAN WEARS HIS OWN HAT, SUIT BY JOHN VARVATOS, SHIRT BY BURBERRY, TIE BY BILLY REID, NECKLACE BY PAMELA LOVE

CHARLOTTE WEARS DRESS BY PAUL SMITH,
NECKLACES BY MADE HER THINK, BRACELET BY
LAZARO SEAN WEARS SUIT BY AGAINST NATURE,
SHIRT BY LL BEAN, TIE BY SHIPLEY & HALMOS,
GLASSES BY KAREN WALKER HIS OWN





CHARLOTTE WEARS WHITE VICTORIAN TORN DRESS & SKULL NECKLACES FROM BESS; BONE NECKLACE BY LAZARO
SEAN WEARS SUIT, JACKET & SHIRT BY PAUL SMITH; BOWTIE BY BILLY REID; PANTS BY MARNI; SHOES BY FLORSHEIM BY DUCKIE BROWN; EYE GLASSES BY KAREN WALKER, LEATHER BELT BY THOMAS PINK

MUSICIAN SEAN LENNON'S FIRST BAND WAS REPRESENTED BY PUBLICIST KELLY CUTRONE'S FIRST PUBLIC RELATIONS COMPANY

When they first met six years ago, Sean Lennon and Charlotte Kemp Muhl were forced to bond through text and email, thanks to careers that kept them apart on a more frequent basis than many love affairs could survive. Today, the artist/musician and model/prodigious poet have organised their lives so they're together more often than not. They co-founded Chimera Music, a hub for musician friends and family, in 2007 – in part a response to the apparent implosion of the major label-led music industry – and started psychedelic folk act Ghost of a Saber Tooth Tiger (GOASTT) around the same time. Their debut single as GOASTT, *Jardin du Luxembourg*, has just been released, and a full length album is due out before the end of 2010. Lennon, the son of Yoko Ono and John Lennon, has worked as a musician in various capacities for years. As a solo artist he released *Into The Sun* (1998) and *Friendly Fire* (2006) while signed to Grand Royal and Capitol Records respectively. He played bass for Cibo Matto and has collaborated with many other artists, including his mother, whose album *Between My Head And The Sky* (2009) he also produced. His most recent solo project has been the soundtrack to Jordan Galland's *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Undead*. As a model, poet and musician, Kemp Muhl is similarly deft at navigating the ever-fragmenting creative world. Shapeshifting between trades, she and Lennon both tackle the challenges of art-as-business without surrendering the old school romanticism that ultimately drives them to create. They live, work and play together, and it all happens out of the inviting, comfortably cluttered apartment they share in Greenwich Village, New York.

NO Everyone does everything these days, it's like some sort of Renaissance.
Charlotte It's a technology Renaissance.
Sean It's a deconstruction Renaissance; everyone's kind of okay at everything. Being masterful at one thing is kind of going out of fashion. I was just reading this book my friend wrote, Jaron Lanier [*You Are Not A Gadget*], and he talks about how one of the downfalls of how fast society runs, because of the internet and technology, is that basically there's sort of an inherent ADD in our lives. So people blog instead of writing newspaper articles and people write gossip columns instead of writing novels and, you know, people write songs instead of albums. Basically, our attention span for consuming media, and our attention span for creating it, has become a lot shorter.
Charlotte I always like to joke that in the future, instead of going to see a movie we'll just go to see a trailer, and that's all movies will be.
Sean And it's almost like that now. [But] I do think modern life promotes, you know, multimedia skill. Because anyone who has a laptop is, sort of, editing home films, they're probably writing their blog and they probably have some other job that has something to do with that. So everyone is exploring different media. I just mean it's harder and harder to dedicate yourself entirely to a specific craft that has a tradition, and succeed, and have a thriving career.

NO Do you think it dilutes the quality of art?
Sean Yeah, of course, because there's a critical mass and at a certain point...
Charlotte There's a critical mass of mediocrity right now.
Sean And not just mediocrity, but even the good stuff gets swallowed by the critical mass of just stuff that's being made.
Charlotte White noise, the white noise drowns it all out.
Sean The sad part is that being a producer of things has been reduced to just sort of competing with this white noise for the attention of the consumer, or the audience or the reader, or whoever it might be.
Charlotte I think capitalism is to blame for all this.
Sean Well, in a way it's capitalism on steroids, because everyone just has to compete. I was actually talking with [a producer] friend about how even 15 years

ago the idea of having a corporate sponsor for your tour, if you're a musician, would almost make you seem immediately uncool. But today, it's just like a rat race, anyone's dying for some corporate sponsorship. The competition is so high.

NO I guess the way we consume has changed, and the way artists view sponsorship too, as a result. Even Pearl Jam did that campaign with Target.
Sean Well, they have to, and I understand that, because basically it's like the supply and demand curve – there's an oversupply now of stuff that the consumer can consume. I do think the result is that – and [it] may be a good by-product – is that people tend to have to probably record and mix their records in their home studio, and probably design the artwork for the cover, and probably learn a couple of instruments.
Charlotte It's not a specific world anymore.
Sean A lot of people do better playing five instruments, or six instruments, and it wasn't like that in the '70s. If you were a multi-instrumentalist you were kind of famous for that, it was unique. Whereas now you can't really get by just playing one instrument anymore. And you can't really get by just having one skill and being really good at that. I think art does suffer because of that. Because, even if you take the time to write a great novel now, most people won't have the attention span to read it all the way through.
Charlotte You have access to everything at all times, so what do you do with that? It's a little bit daunting actually. I think people, despite doing so much, are actually in more of a paralysis than ever before, because we have so many options at our fingertips.
Sean [But] despite our sort of inherent suspicion of these sorts of technologies, our lives are sort of defined by them. More than we'd like to admit. I mean, the truth is [Charlotte and I] probably wouldn't have been able to get to know each other if we hadn't had text messaging.
Charlotte Because he was on tour at the time, travelling the world.
Sean And she was travelling at least as much with modelling, so it was interesting, because if I hadn't been able to text her 24 hours a day I probably would've just lost touch with her and maybe seen her every once in a while. But because of our connection electronically, our relationship was able to blossom.
Charlotte I remember every time I got a text or an email from him I'd get adrenaline in my fingertips and I'd go and read it and we'd be constantly trying to one up each other with wordplay and just this really fun, antagonistic flirtation.
Sean And now my texts are like, 'Grunt. I'm tired.'

NO I guess the Beatles started it, but in your dad's time there was obviously that expectation, and aspiration on the part of musicians, to be number one. To break through and be the biggest thing. Do you think it helps not having that pressure to the same degree today?
Sean I think there's a lot of things that you're talking about there, because the arena was so much smaller, and the people that were making rock and roll were the most cutting-edge, interesting people in society; that was the very edge of what society was becoming, and it was controversial. It was dangerous to the older generation, and not many people were doing it. Even in order to become a guitar player you not only had to sort of be excommunicated from your conservative family who thought you were crazy, but you also had to spend a couple of hundred dollars, [which was worth a lot more at the time], and you chose to buy a guitar, become a renegade, and then also you were sort of riding the wave of this social change. So it was a completely different thing, whereas now being a musician is a very common event. Anyone can do it, and buying a guitar is not a financial commitment for most people in the way that it used to be, 'cause guitars are actually much cheaper now than they used to be, relatively.

CHARLOTTE WEARS DRESS BY CAMILLA & MARC,
NECKLACES & RINGS BY MADE HER THINK & LAZARO,
BRACELET BY LAZARO SEAN WEARS SHIRT BY FRED PERRY,
PANTS BY SHIPLEY & HALMOS, BOW TIE BY THOMAS PINK,
BELT BY HIS OWN, JACKET BY ANTONIO AZZUOLO,
PIN BY LAZARO, GLASSES BY KAREN WALKER HIS OWN





CHARLOTTE WEARS DRESS BY PAUL SMITH, NECKLACES BY MADE HER THINK, BRACELET & RING BY LAZARO, SEAN'S HAT BY ALEXANDER MCQUEEN
SEAN WEARS SUIT BY AGAINST NATURE, SHIRT BY LL BEAN, TIE BY SHIPLEY & HALMOS, GLASSES BY KAREN WALKER HIS OWN

CHARLOTTE WEARS DRESS BY CAMILLA & MARC, NECKLACES & RINGS BY MADE HER THINK & LAZARO, BRACELET BY LAZARO SEAN WEARS SHIRT BY FRED PERRY, PANTS BY SHIPLEY & HALMOS,
JACKET BY ANTONIO AZZUOLO, PIN BY LAZARO, GLASSES BY KAREN WALKER HIS OWN, HAT BY ALEXANDER MCQUEEN HIS OWN, SHOES BY GUCCI HIS OWN





CHARLOTTE WEARS WHITE VICTORIAN TORN DRESS & SKULL NECKLACES FROM BESS. BONE NECKLACE BY LAZARO

SEAN WEARS SUIT JACKET & SHIRT BY PAUL SMITH. BOWTIE BY BILLY REID. GLASSES BY KAREN WALKER



Charlotte There's not near as much pressure to 'break it' now, as to just break even in the music industry. You can't really break out unless you're making dance music these days. I mean, that's the only thing that's really on the top of the charts.

Sean I feel like a lot of the people, like my dad and the Stones, they were pioneers, and they were paving a road that had never even been looked at or considered before, let alone walked upon. It was a totally different event, whereas now playing music means something different – and I don't think someone like my dad, born today, would necessarily have found music to be as appealing, because it's not as edgy, it's not as interesting to be a musician, in fact. It's something totally different. [So], yes the pressure is way less, because the stakes were much higher in those days.

Charlotte I really feel like now, because everyone is an artist, there's almost no audience. 'Cause everyone's just doing their thing and not listening to the rest of what's happening. Back then the fourth wall was still there, the red curtain was still there, between the audience and the world and then the artists and the musicians.

NO There's a direct connection with the artist now in a lot of cases – people keep blogs, or Twitter.

Sean But the idea that a famous Hollywood star or a famous rock star was somehow special, that's kind of over, actually, because now, even the most famous people – like Brad Pitt or Angelina Jolie – we see them sort of looking their worst, picking their [bikini out of their] butt on the beach when they have a wedgie. We just see every mundane, intimate moment of every single celebrity, so it's almost like the audience's relationship with the makers of art has completely changed. There's no mystique anymore. In fact, I think the era of big celebrities is ending. If you look at film, young people are attracted to movies like *Avatar* that are based on ideas and special effects, and they didn't need [a] Brad Pitt to star in that film. Even the big Hollywood actors aren't getting paid in the same way, 'cause I don't think people worship, or idealise celebrity as much anymore, which is a good thing. We realise how human everyone is. The biggest celebrities now are people who basically allow people to film them 24 hours a day in their houses, picking their noses and having fights with their parents. Which is the opposite of Frank Sinatra and Marilyn Monroe and even Elvis, or whatever.

Charlotte But Sean – I don't think it's that we don't idealise celebrity anymore, because I definitely think we idealise celebrity, but as a means to an end. Whereas I think we used to idealise celebrities for their craft, and *that* is what's changed.

NO You're both pretty atypical in the way you approach your 'crafts'. You have a lot going on.

Charlotte Ha! Well, we are involved with making graphic art and making fashion, like, I'm working on a line of antique kimonos that are re-tailored into super modern ways by threeASFOUR, and then obviously we do music, and really, ultimately want to do film. So, of course, we're such hypocrites, as we blather on and complain about the multimedia world. That's definitely the world we live in and love.

Sean I guess I didn't mean to complain as much as just set the context for why I think most people are like us. Meaning, most, let's say, indie musicians are actually sort of drawing their album covers and designing their... it's kind of like a way to be.

Charlotte Well, like Adam Green [singer/songwriter from The Moldy Peaches] – he just had a painting exhibit the other day. He had a bunch of really cool paintings, and paper mâché. I think everyone has their hands in many things.

NO How did you start working together as GOASTT?

Charlotte It started as a joke – it really did start as a joke.

Sean I basically asked her, because I was looking through her stuff in her old apartment... and I found something she'd written when she was very young. Like, it was obviously written by, like, an eight-year-old.

Charlotte I was seven, actually.

Sean Seven or something – and it was a play called the Ghost of a Saber Tooth Tiger. I just remember the dialogue was like, 'Look out! Look out! It's the ghost of a saber tooth tiger!' Like, 'Ahhh!'

Charlotte The dialogue was way better.

Sean And people running from the saber tooth – right, it was something like, 'Hark! Who goes there?' 'Tis the ghost of a saber tooth tiger!'

Charlotte 'But indeed!'

Sean I just thought the tiger was so cool. I literally said, 'This is such a cool title that we have to start a band, just to have this name.' So in a way, it was a joke.

Charlotte It's true, we just started a band based on that play. I wish at seven years old I had had some premonition. I'm so glad I came up with that title or we might not be sitting here today [laughs].

Sean And honestly, I wasn't totally joking, I really just thought, 'This is a really cool band name, if I saw this as a band name I would like it.'

NO Do you still write, Charlotte? Not musically, other stuff.

Charlotte Well...

Sean Yeah, she's working on a screenplay that I'm helping her with.

Charlotte Instead of writing poetry I write lyrics now, which is like the same thing, but I'm –

Sean But you're also working on the screenplay, which is –

Charlotte Like everyone else in the world! Yes, and we're working on the screenplay. But I don't write. I wrote a novel when I was 11, but –

Sean It's, like, 700 pages. It's a long epic.

Charlotte It's really long!

Sean And it's called *Quaternion Elements*.

Charlotte It's so dorky!

Sean I read the first two chapters and it's serious! It's like a real sci-fi novel.

Charlotte It's like *Dune* or something. I was such a dweeb. It was definitely different for you growing up.

Sean I was forced to be in the world. But definitely my experience was probably not representative of an average experience... but I was definitely forced to participate in regular society, whereas you weren't so much.

Charlotte Well, in an incredibly involved way.

Sean Yeah, but you weren't as much.

Charlotte He constantly had bodyguards with him. I feel like he was never alone, and I was like, kind of always alone. But it's weird, 'cause our minds are so similar now. It's interesting when you meet someone, and you come from such a completely different background, but you relate so much. And you think in so many of the same ways. I really am always wondering how much nurture versus nature there is in the development of someone's personality. Like, is everything just learned from experience, or are you actually born innately with [your] personality?

Sean Well, it can't be one or the other – that's why I always find the nature versus nurture argument ridiculous, because obviously it's a combination of both.

Charlotte Yes, but the argument is: which *ratio*.

Sean It must depend on what your life is like. I mean, if your life is completely uneventful then you might not be impacted, but there are certain events that can happen that can change you forever, and dramatically.


Charlotte Well, I feel like you've had a lot of those experiences.

Sean Yeah, probably.

Interview Sarah Illingworth Images Alex Freund

CHARLOTTE WEARS NECKLACES BY LAZARO & MADE HER THINK. UNDERWEAR BY AGENT PROVOCATEUR. HEADRESS BY NORISOL. FERRARI SEAN WEARS HIS OWN TOP HAT. SUIT BY JOHN VARVATOS. SHIRT BY BURBERRY. BOW TIE BY BILLY REID. NECKLACE BY PAMELA LOVE. SHOES BY JEFFERY WEST. GLASSES BY KAREN WALKER HIS OWN. BELT BY JOHN VARVATOS





CHARLOTTE WEARS
DRESS BY PAUL SMITH,
NECKLACES BY MADE
HER THINK, BRACELET
BY LAZARO, HAT BY
ALEXANDER MCQUEEN



CHARLOTTE WEARS BONE NECKLACE BY LAZARO, THIN CHAIN NECKLACE BY MADE HER THINK, UNDERWEAR BY AGENT PROVOCATEUR, HEADRESS BY NORISOL FERRARI



SEAN WEARS TOP HAT HIS OWN, SUIT AND BELT BY JOHN VARVATOS, SHIRT BY BURBERRY, BOW TIE BY BILLY REID, NECKLACE BY PAMELA LOVE, SHOES BY JEFFERY WEST, GLASSES BY KAREN WALKER HIS OWN



CHARLOTTE WEARS SKIRT BY PAUL SMITH, NECKLACE BY BESS
SEAN WEARS SHIRT BY TROVATA, VEST BY JOHN VARVATOS, PANTS BY MARNI, SHOES BY FLOPSHEIM BY DUCKIE BROWN, HAT BY ROBERT GELLAR, GLASSES BY KAREN WALKER HIS OWN



CHARLOTTE WEARS DRESS BY PAUL SMITH, NECKLACES BY MADE HER THINK, BRACELET & RING BY LAZARO
SEAN WEARS SUIT BY AGAINST NATURE, SHIRT BY LL BEAN, TIE BY SHIPLEY & HALMOS, GLASSES BY KAREN WALKER HIS OWN



CHARLOTTE WEARS DRESS BY PAUL
SMITH, NECKLACES BY MADE HER
THINK, BRACELET & RING BY LAZARO



CHARLOTTE WEARS DRESS BY MANDY COON, NECKLACES BY LAZARO, RINGS BY LAZARO & MADE HER THINK, BRACELET BY MADE HER THINK, HEADPIECE BY NORISOL FERRARI
SEAN WEARS PANTS BY MARNI, SHIRT BY ANTONIO AZZUOLO, JACKET BY SHIPLEY & HALMOS, TIE BY BURBERRY, SHOES & GLASSES HIS OWN



CHARLOTTE WEARS SKIRT BY PAUL SMITH, BRACELETS & RINGS BY LAZARO & MADE HER THINK
SEAN WEARS SHIRT BY TROVATA, VEST BY JOHN VARVATOS, PANTS BY MARNI, BELT BY THOMAS PINK, BOW TIE BY AGAINST NATURE, HAT BY ROBERT GELLAR



CHARLOTTE WEARS WHITE VICTORIAN TORN DRESS & SKULL NECKLACES FROM BESS, BONE NECKLACE BY LAZARO
SEAN WEARS SUIT, JACKET & SHIRT BY PAUL SMITH, BOWTIE BY BILLY REID, GLASSES BY KAREN WALKER

CHARLOTTE WEARS JACKET BY BESS, SHORTS BY OBESITY & SPEED, NECKLACE BY LAZARO & MADE HER THINK, BRACELETS BY LAZARO, RING BY LAZARO & MADE HER THINK, FEATHERS BY NORISOL FERRARI, HATBY ROBERT GELLAR
SEAN WEARS SHIRT BY TROVATA, PANTS BY SHIPLEY & HALVOS, SOCKS BY THOMAS PINK, BELT BY FENDI, GLASSES BY KAREN WALKER HIS OWN



