



FROM FREE  
BAR SHOWS  
TO DOUBLE-  
PLATINUM  
RECORDS:

# Eyedress

REFLECTS ON THE  
IMPORTANCE OF THE  
SIMPLE THINGS,  
COLLABORATION, FAMILY,  
AND HIS UPCOMING  
ALBUM

WORDS BY MARI CÁRDENAS  
PHOTOS BY RAZY FAOURI

Shrouded by a layer of smoke and weak light, and peered under a gauzy poster of the Billie Holliday legs flipped as a silhouette with a lit cigarette, **Eyedress** crowd walked in a smoky mood for an his southeast Los Angeles show at the Blue, being his eagerness to a saturated crowd that up to his track "I don't think to be your friend."

Preparing fans for his West Coast air show tour in March 2004, **Eyedress** and **Friends** ran a one-night show in late October 2003 with a host of the -- three guitarists, bassist, drummer, and a keyboard player -- alongside opening acts from California's indie scene and rapper **Marshall Mathers** and alternative post-punk artist **Pavement**.

"Looking, I was pretty nervous before the show went on," Eyedress admitted after the fact. "Once I got up there, there was no tension at all. I just tried to make sure everyone was having a good time."

While reflecting on his biggest show to date and recalling the current excitement, though, it's equally as important to look back to Eyedress' roots, to the places of his history that have contributed to him getting to where he is today.

Born 1976, **Vincent** in the Philippines, **Eyedress** frequented many places here in the US years since. After moving from Manila to Phoenix, to Orange County, back to the Philippines, and then to London, Eyedress has been planted in Los Angeles since 2000. These various locations have each contributed to his musical journey in unique ways.

**Vincent** was always interested in anything that resonated -- hip-hop, R'n'B, jazz, indie, punk, hip-hop, rap music -- also citing **J Dilla** and **Pipilo** **Letras** as key influences. Supporting his love of a wide array of music, his dad taught him to gather as a kid (specifically, a Family Super with an area, purchased from **Golden Center** while they lived in Phoenix) when he was 10 and living in San Clemente. **Vincent** joined his first band, **The Liberal Underground** (not his name choice) as a bassist. However, it wasn't until he moved back to the Philippines at 18 that the music truly began to roll.

After the move, **Vincent** took to **MySpace** and quickly connected with someone who passed about being local youth artistically. **Shirley** **Valencia**, the president to add all of this person's friends and managed him to hang out, when he didn't know anyone there at that point, quickly, the ear opened and wanted to spend time with **Vincent**, too, and this relationship quickly grew.

"I met **Jillie** [Pillbox] in the Philippines. When we met up, we're just two friends over since he taught me how to make beats, and what sampling was and that what me to start a band [the Eyes]." **Vincent** recalled. The band would play away from show to show but up until the Eyes was asked to open for **Blue** **Ballroom** in Singapore and Malaysia in 2000. The shows with **Goldbase** are noted as Eyedress' first live gig. Shortly after, the bassist for the Eyes quit the band to pursue being a teacher in Spain -- if their leader hadn't left, **Vincent** never would have become Eyedress.





Beyond *Two Eyes*, Valdez continued to help Vinola with this vision under his new moniker, even early on with music videos such as the compellingly-quirky like and indie ones for the track "Nature Trips." Now, both live in Los Angeles and Valdez is a director, music designer (with projects including the recent *Sydnora*), a Max Goldstein collaborator and *Sydnora* solo month sign, and avid supporter of *Sydnora*. The pair have proceeded to compare their dreams, including playing Coachella together in 2021. Moving into 2024, there's sure to be more than one accomplishment for them both.

Since signing to **RED Records** at the beginning of 2023, *Sydnora* has released ten new singles (not including remixes). After a decade of consistency, he also finally reaped the rewards of his hard work when his song "Lushes," taken off of the junior album *Let's Skip to the Wedding*, blew up on TikTok and appeared in over 100 videos on the platform in 2023. The viral song earned *Sydnora* his first gold record, which has since ascended to double platinum. Subsequently, his other tracks "Remains Less" and "Something About You" both went platinum as well, contributing to his reaching over 100 monthly listeners on Spotify.

Facial to his expanding audience on a streaming level, *Sydnora*'s stage dynamic has also grown over the years, as Vinola used to perform alone, playing off his laptop. With the label's support, he gained the financial ability to create a more entertaining show and he can also pay band members to join along — he references Filipino musician *Yona P. Dela Cruz*

vinola and valdez are a dynamic duo



trajectory with this in mind. "Everyone gets excited for their own, then guess how, they eventually realize dreams, and it becomes this whole thing."

In addition to expanding his live presence with the addition of band members, Vinola has always placed a large amount of value on collaboration with other musicians in general. This includes his tracks with *The Marbles*, the *DJL* inspired four-member track "Bass Up in the Sky" and four-releasing track "Kagayate Ways" and an unreleased feature in *King Kade's* "The Cabal League" where he speaks in Tagalog. The most recent collaboration that opened Vinola's eyes was last year's "My Single Jump," an which he worked over again, alongside Max Goldstein.

The collaboration started after Goldstein reached out to work together. Vinola recalls bluntness about the two had first started recording in the mansion, with him stuck out in diamonds and gold chains and flexing his assets. When writing "My Single Jump," he quickly realized that moment

important takeaway is to keep it simple and to, as he put it, "not be a fancy class kind of guy." Coming from Max Goldstein, who is successful and rich as fuck, he admits the most simple one wouldn't have a formal/academic drum set," he says. "That collaboration changed things for me. We guess he thought, he has fancy recording equipment but I liked that about him." Reflecting on his upbringing from having nothing, he realizes that the most important things are the simple things. Naturally, Vinola has shifted his focus toward being less materialistic.

Vinola's last full-length album under *Sydnora*, *ALL THE SINS*, also features a certain sort of collaborations. *The Dream*, *Remains Less*, his partner *Blade*, the new operators "Sydnora and Friends" (Producer and Karal Smith), and a whopping 21 others. In typical *Sydnora* style, his opening project Vinola to be announced follows suit. "It's like 100% 100, but an album. Or an award show where I collaborate with every artist. And of course, I have my own songs on there," he explains. "Through short-circuiting."

"I'd never think that I'd be in this or your track or vice — you must all types of people," he continued. "That's what inspired my music taste, being around every kind of work of life [all the artists] that I've shared with and how we connect together is more like a community than anything."

For this new project, Vinola named a musician in Manila and through that time, Max Goldstein, Julian Sanchez from *Blaze Me The Beat* (@beats), and Dean Hunt collaborator Harmony Barba, known for writing the cult music film, also contributed for some songs on the new album, and Vinola also mentioned having two *Tina Turner* collaborations in the works for the record. That said, fans can anticipate a varied lineup of contributors coming to Vinola's indie 100, coming soon.

"I had collaborations more interesting because I could make songs by myself all day, but there's a certain kind of magic that happens when two different artists make something." Vinola stated. "That's in the day, I also I think a lot of indie artists would



vinola and valdez



PHOTO: GUY  
FOR THE RECORD

PHOTO: GUY FOR THE RECORD

PHOTO: GUY FOR THE RECORD

collaborate. They would just drop their own ideas with no discussion. I like that that was more of a rap thing. I want it to sound like a normal playlist."

Another big part of *Systemz*'s MI is its aesthetics, from his sound alone to the music videos which are heavily influenced by the film and film, featuring internet graphics, social media, claymation, and caricatures. He cites his dad's work as an animator as Jimmy Neutron and *Jimmy Neutron* as inspiration, and also notes that his dad started him to anime, claymation, and social media. "The most important piece of reference, though, is being a child of the 80s. [My art is] just me trying to make my childhood and hopefully kids that grew up on my stuff like the same one. I feel like all the art for me always inspired me to be open and not be super square. I just love anything that inspires creativity."

A big reference to *Woola's* upbringing within the *Systemz* world is his song "Team Mom." The straight track was written in appreciation for his mom's influence and care when she was raising him in the film. He reflects on when she'd drive him to school, shops, the mall, and more while his dad was at work. The video that follows a montage portraying his mom's acts of service through recreational footage and claymation. "I wanted to acknowledge and show all the great things she did for me while she was raising me," he explains. "There aren't a lot of songs about moms."

What makes this music video even more interesting is who directed and

produced it — *Wooly Burt's* (Richard Kline, *Wagon Karma*) is known in particular for (since 2008), most notably for their work in the same space as acts such as Inner West, Coco, Chany Hanny, and Tapes Parties. When *Woola* moved back to the UK, his relationship with *Wooly Burt's* began when they brought him into a 2018 restaurant tour with Inner West (as Kline was the tour manager). They also introduced him to the guy who later became his brother.

*Woola* recalls how he eventually stopped working with *Wooly Burt's*, though, since they were getting "too fucked up on one point" and he "wanted to get [his] shit together because [he'd] run from the UK." This time additionally led him to begin working with a New Jersey-based manager who paid money from him. *Woola* and *Wooly Burt's* have since reconnected in small ways, most notably via the video for "Team Mom" — for the video, *Woola* went get Kline to play his dad. Kline to drive, and they had spent past artist ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~'s girlfriend to play his mom (with Kline's family as the stand-in for ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~).

"I reported that I parted ways with *Wooly Burt's*," *Woola* admitted. "Team Mom" was like a full circle moment where it was like, hey, I need to make things right with the people who have my back. So, that's why I got them to do the video. It was a community thing — if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have met my wife and none of anything that I have would be there. So, it was [my way of saying] thank you and trying to not f\*ck up about the people who believe in me early on."

