

# SEEING STARS

The indie pop band rocks with a new sound.



**S**tars' latest record, *In Our Bedroom After the War* (Arts & Crafts/EMI), has a fitting title for a group fresh off a grueling two-year tour that tested their endurance—and their nerves. The Montreal-based quintet—composed of Torquil Campbell, Amy Millan, Evan Cranley, Chris Seligman and Pat McGee—may have struggled the first few years, but after their 2004 CD, *Set Yourself on Fire*, the group earned kudos and the album went gold. With their new-found fame and modest fortune, Stars could now afford a tour bus instead of sleeping five to a hotel room. Yet, in spite of the increased space, the constant closeness resulted in some friction. “At this point, I’m just happy that we’re still a band after seven years!” quips Millan. An unexpected bonus to all this testy togetherness was that it brought out a rougher musical sensibility. “The last album’s songs were more layered and came together by the end of production,” says Millan. “With *In Our Bedroom*, the songs came out ready.” The band’s lush instrumentation and poetic lyrics are still there, but the sound is more explosive. “While we were on the road, we produced a very different sound,” says Millan. “We wanted to translate that into this record. It’s definitely more raw, but it maintains that pop slickness we’re known for.” Stars’ other trademark—literate lyrics—is found in bittersweet, narrative-style songs like “Bitches in Tokyo,” which explores the rigours of touring, and the heartbreaker “Personal,” with its lonely take on the personals scene. “We’re telling the story of what it is to be human,” says Millan. **BRIONY SMITH**

## REVIEW

There's nothing like the charming, biting, exquisitely balanced interplay between Stars singers Amy Millan and Torquil Campbell. On *In Our Bedroom After the War* (Arts & Crafts/EMI), they're backed by soulful synth-pop tunes that cover moods ranging from wistful to lustful to angry, but it's the repartee that makes these twisted love songs so memorable. **MARY DICKIE**



## SCENE CHANGE

Kevin Drew grooves to his own beat.

When you're the co-leader of a family-size ensemble in which virtually everyone has his or her own side project, it can be pretty tricky to hold the whole thing together. Maybe that's why Broken Social Scene's Kevin Drew stepped away from the mother ship to work on a solo album. That said, Drew's *Spirit If...* (Arts & Crafts/EMI) was recorded with BSS' Ohad Benchetrit and Charles Spearin, and most of the tribe do play on it. Yet it has its own sound, both like and unlike BSS' soaring, emotional epics. “Obviously, because you hear me and my chords, it sounds like BSS,” says Drew. “But it doesn't have the signature wall-of-sound Dave Newfeld production: the chaos, the drowned melodies and all that. With this project, I could do what I wanted.” That included reeling in guests like Tom Cochrane, Gonzales and Feist. “It's ridiculous to have guests with BSS because there are so many members,” says Drew. “This time, I got to work with some of my heroes. I didn't have a board of approval—not that BSS really does, but you do want to live up to your friends' expectations.” **M.D.**