

Interview with Sacha Sacket

By OutBurbs.com

We recently caught up with the emerging—and out—dependent recording artist Sacha Sacket as his US tour enters Illinois. The singer/songwriter recently released his second album *Shadowed* and is promoting it via free performances at colleges, festivals and upcoming Gay Pride celebrations.

Campus Appearances: [Northern Illinois University](#) (4/7), [Loyola University](#) (4/11), [Joliet Junior College](#) (4/12)

In 2001, Sacha's debut *Alabaster Flesh* was nominated for best album in the Out Music Awards. *Shadowed*, according to Sacha, is much different. Passionate, personal and expressive stories set by a piano, escorted by acoustics and electronics and told by a signature powerful voice often called his best asset.

But make no mistake. With the stinging "Sweet Suicide", the mischievous "Cruel Attempt", and the energetic release in "Kite High", *Shadowed* is no mannered-mainstream pop. "I felt it was time to delve into dark things," says Sacha. The result is both proverbial and catalytic—you may not only recognize the struggles but be inspired by them. You can stream the entire album online.

As many say, Sacha is best live, so that's how we wanted him. He talked with us about his music, his crush on Walt Whitman and told us all to reject stereotypes and to hold our lovers' hands in the street.

OB: Thanks for agreeing to shoot the breeze with us a bit, Sacha. We know you're busy performing all over the US. What's all that traveling like for you?

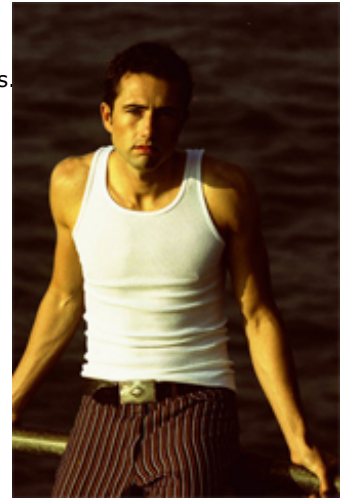
SS: No problem! The tour has been a lot of fun actually. It's funny because people almost expect me to complain about it a lot of the time. The road can be a bit tiring, but I genuinely enjoy traveling and meeting new people—having completely different experiences everyday. It completely suits my nature, so things have been great and very positive. I find that my music really opens doors on conversations after the show. Talks are usually very personal and real. People feel comfortable sharing their lives, joys, and trials with me—which, of course, I love. I would much rather have a deep conversation than talk about the weather. So I love to tour.

OB: Haven't you been to the Chicago area before? How do you like our city and the college towns that you perform in?

SS: Actually, this will be my first time in Chicago! I am revved about it! I always seem to visit the O'Hare, but never get to stop in for a few days. College towns are a lot of fun in general. As I said, I love to see new places. A lot of cities have very different energies. I am in Des Moines, Iowa at the moment and it's so different than what I thought it would be. I am actually enjoying it quite a bit here!

OB: Oh, we didn't realize you'd be visiting for the first time! Great to have you!

We've read a bit about how you got started in music by moving on from a brief two years of piano lessons as a child to teaching yourself to play and then onto high school theater. What made you



make the jaunt into making a living at music and how did it all begin?

SS: I love how you said jaunt! It is a bit more difficult to make the jump, I think. Music was always what I was doing since I was about six really. It has been the central force in my life. I have a lot of other sides to me. I mean, I am from Los Angeles, so you can't get out with trying your hand at acting. I also studied film at USC. So, there are all these other disciplines that I have been involved in and continue to involve myself in. I have produced some theater in Los Angeles and will continue once I get the time. I have some short films under my belt and see that in my future as well.

But music has always been my life, my number one. I have always said that. I have to make a career at it to become better at my art. I mean, you can't get that good when you are waiting tables eight hours a day or something, so the step into the career of music was necessary to me. I refuse to use the excuse of a side job. I think once I forced myself to do it, things just fell into place. I think it's more just making up your mind and letting the pieces fall where they may. A lot of people do not do that and get stuck. You have to take control of your career or else the art suffers. So I just took over and stopped waiting for people to do it for me.

OB: How is Shadowed different from your first album, Alabaster Flesh?

SS: Shadowed is very different from Alabaster Flesh in a lot of ways. All the way from production to the style of lyric writing to the actual music itself. I think Shadowed was much more about needing to connect with my heart and speak from that place. Alabaster has much more of a mental world to it. It's very "intellectual". It was like, "How many metaphors and references can I shove into this one line?" And Shadowed was much more about getting where I was at across to the audience. Bleeding on the recording. And that was a big challenge for me. It was a completely different way of approaching the music and a change that needed to happen in my opinion. I think too much got lost in translation on Alabaster and my goal was to really open up on Shadowed. Not be convoluted or hide behind the words.

OB: What can people expect when they come to see you perform?

SS: Well, it's a bit different from the album. I am strongest live, I think. I love the raw qualities of a live performance. I am much more about creating the space I was at when I wrote each song. There are no barriers when I perform live. I work hard to be as open to people and with what I am experiencing in the songs as I can. It's definitely not a "cool" performance, it's more about being real and true. So I think it comes across as passionate, soothing, and jarring at different times. I try and have a laugh here and there too.

OB: After listening to the authenticity of your music, one can understand why you're an independent artist. But tell us how you feel about being an independent musician?

SS: I think it's the only way! I find it absolutely necessary to have control on what I create. I really couldn't take having a business man coming into the recording studio and telling me what I need to sing about; and that is really what happens when you are dealing with the majors. Every time I have had an offer or any interest, it has always been in the effort to change me on a very fundamental level. And that would honestly kill the whole reason why I love music to begin with. I am doing quite well on my own to be honest, so I see no need to rush into anything. I have nothing against working with anyone. It just really has to be more on terms with respecting creation instead of what someone just arbitrarily decides.

OB: Why do you think your music resonates with so many diverse types of people?

SS: I am still not fully sure why to be honest. I have people that love my music from all across the board. It's shocking how diverse the people are that end up at my shows. And I absolutely love that. I think it has to do with the honesty I work to keep in my songs. People come for very different

reasons as well. Some enjoy the experimental and original nature of what I do; while others are purely into the lyrics; and some just love the way I sing or play on purely a sonic level. I haven't really found one defining characteristic that applies to my popularity.

OB: Tell us about your muse, Sacha? What drives you (besides the coffee you drink while writing)?

SS: My muse. Well, I think inspiration comes from very different places in life, of course, but one of the things that guides me is fear, actually. I always try and head towards my fears. I figure if it scares the crap out of me, then it is probably a good place to explore. That way the music stays relevant and passionate. It is where I find my truth—where I find tangible change and growth.

OB: We understand that you're inspired by authors, as well as musicians. And there's quite a range—from Walt Whitman to Allen Ginsberg! Who are your biggest influences and why do they rouse you so heavily?

SS: Walt Whitman is my greatest influence, I think. It is his voice in his poetry. He has a view on life that has grown to define me more and more. He has a very positivistic viewpoint on the world, but not at the cost of being hokey. He is not optimistic at the cost of being ignorant to life or avoiding the ugly sides of life. He sees beauty in it all—even in the ravages of war—and deals with it with both justice and amazing clarity. There is an earthy spirituality to him. He is very sensual and lusty, but transcendent with the same breath. His craft and writing style is also unparalleled. So yeah, I have a crush on Walt Whitman.

OB: Ah, the perfect segue! What kind of an impact has being an openly gay musician had on your music? On your career?

SS: I think, if anything, it honestly has helped me. People automatically assume that it is going to negatively impact what you do and if you were signed to a major label that might be so. But in indie music, I think it has been something important to be honest about and has helped people around me deal with their own lives.

My music is not about being gay only, at all. That's like writing songs only for men. Who wants that? My music is about expressing our common thread, our humanity, the things that bind us together. Our pain, our struggle, our fight, our humor. The fact that I am gay is important to be honest about and I think people appreciate that. I don't believe in hiding any aspect of myself. I work hard to be as open as possible. That is part of being an artist.

OB: When you consider our place as gays and lesbians today, what pleases you the most? What aggravates you the most?

SS: That is a difficult question. I love how queer people really make their own rules. We tend to follow our own creed because society has, in part, rejected us. And I think it works better that way. People should try and understand the world instead of just following societal rules blindly. We create our own moral codes and, in most cases, it's a really healthy thing to do.

One thing that frustrates me is the amount that sex dictates the gay sphere. I am all about sex and sexual freedom—don't get me wrong. But being gay isn't all about that six pack and I think we forget that. We have all been through the closet experience. All of us. We all have a powerful sense of shame in us. We think twice about holding our lover's hand walking down a street. These things also bind us together as a group. And I think we forget that.

OB: We know young people are important to you. What advice would you give them as they find their own place?

SS: Drop the stereotype. Be your own soul. Be true to your heart, your passion. Hold hands with

your lover on the street. Have courage. We need your irreverence to move forward as a community. I think if everyone just held hands in the gay community, we would see the biggest shift in society. Just that simple act. All of a sudden people would see how many of us there really are in all walks of life. It would change things profoundly. So many people still hide who they are and it is really hurting the movement. I think it is why every state is banning gay marriage to be honest. We are not visible enough.

OB: And as you find your own place, Sacha, do you see anyone special in your future? What can we say, we know readers are looking for the “are you single” question. Feel free to tell us it’s none of our business. We won’t cry—much.

SS: Touring is one of the hardest things in the relationship department. It worries me a bit because I am never home. It becomes almost impossible to retain a solid connection with someone. I am lucky to be dating someone at the moment, but also find that I am getting tired of saying “I miss you” all the time. It gets hard and I am trying to figure out what the hell I am going to do about that.

OB: When you're not concentrating on music, what are you doing? From reading your blog, it appears that you may be antiquing for a new travel trunk. What else passes the time for you?**SS:** Well this tour has afforded me very little time. I thought there would be more time to have fun and write more music. The one thing that I make sure I do after every show is hang out with people that come around. That keeps me going. I love learning about people, their lives, their struggles. As I said before, the music has a real way of opening up conversation. So I try and do that as much as possible. I love relating to people. I love connecting.

OB: Well, thank you for passing a little time and connecting with us, Sacha. Anything else you would like to say before we let our readers go buy your new album?

SS: Definitely check out my website at sachasocket.com. You can get the album there and also read up on what I am doing on my tour. I have a photo essay on it. And please come say hi on the road!

Thanks for the great questions!

Interview by: Micah Chamberlain & Ryan Varju. Article provided in partnership with OutBurbs.com.