

With larger than life indie-pop anthems born of small town boredom, coming of age, big nights out and young love gone wrong, modernlove are a new generation's brightest hope – already racking up streams in their millions and selling out shows, simply by singing about what they know and having a good time doing it. From playing dingey rural pubs to working with super-producer Luca (of Arlo Parks and Lana Del Rey fame), this Irish band of young 20-somethings are about to show the world the true heights of their ambition. Formed in Drogheda near Dublin in 2016 of childhood friends and mutual pals, the four-piece came together as “the only people in town we knew who liked music”. Their shared influences of the game-changing future-pop of The 1975 and The Japanese House, the new wave sounds of The Cure and New Order, the danceable indie of Bloc Party and Bombay Bicycle Club, the experimental ambience of Jon Hopkins and Aphex Twin, and a whole lot of day-glo pop-punk took them from jamming covers for the hell of it to carving out a monolithic, genre-shifting sound of their own to lift them out of the doldrums of their sleepy hometown.

“There’s very little by way of a ‘scene’ in Ireland in general, and outside of Dublin there was nothing,” says guitarist and frontman Barry Lally. “It was just us in our band and all of our friends that came to our tiny gigs in Drogheda. Our own little scene just came to swallow us all. Our whole lives formed around it.”

After countless tight-knit community-forming local pub gigs, seemingly lightyears away from the buzzing London circuit or any real chance to get noticed, the world went quiet when the first COVID lockdown hit. The four music students did the only thing they knew and retired to their bedrooms to pen some songs. An A&R man from Akira Records discovered them, the songs were then re-recorded, re-mixed and officially re-released. That’s when the world started to listen.

“We’d just been throwing songs out into the ether, and there were no gigs for us to find out if there was anyone listening or getting invested,” says Lally. “Just by chance, Akira heard one of our songs called ‘Let Me Know’ on Spotify and that’s how we ended up getting signed.”

Since then, they’ve dropped debut 2021 EP ‘monochrome blue’ (featuring the 1million+ streamed kaleidoscopic pop of ‘Liquorice’) and 2022’s sky-reachingly ambitious ‘Oh My Mind’ EP. There’s a full spectrum to their pop palette, showcased further on the upcoming ‘Only Ever Only You’ EP due in Spring 2023.

Asked to pin down their sound, drummer Cian McCluskey replies: “It depends on the week! We could be making ambient, noisy dance music, emo, pop punk, or indie. The one thing that runs throughout our music is that it’s melodic and major key”. Explaining their unique sonic DNA, bassist Daniel Rooney adds: “We’re all quite adept at producing, and we all write. The style of a song can be informed by each of us individually, then we all jump on it to add our personality and variety.”

Completed by guitarist Graham Fagan, modernlove write music to be played loud, live and to drive fans to the dancefloor. Lyrically, Lally explains how the words are there to “paint a picture of young people’s lives; partying, drinking too much, falling in love, more drinking, falling out of love, and how that pattern affects you.”

This upcoming EP, like their previous efforts, is “written from and inspired by our teenage

years and young adulthood – encapsulating who we are and who we’ve been up until this point”.

There’s the bittersweet but biting arena punk of ‘Take Me Far Away’, spitting back at the “frustration, boredom and repetition that drives you insane” before you fly the nest and leave town. ‘Ruin Your Night’ is an ironically danceable indie-pop gem that details “being in a relationship that’s not going that great, drinking too much because of it, messing up someone’s evening, knowing you’re doing it, and knowing that there’s nothing you can do to stop it”, explains Lally of that all-too-familiar feeling, while ‘Until Your Heart Stops Beating’ similarly takes the end of a relationship and turns into a bop as Lally pines: “We get dressed after sex, something about the way you move, then lose interest, I expect that whatever we have is doomed”. The emo-tinged rush of title track ‘Only Ever Only You’ completes the EP, inspired by “just utter love, but of course set against the backdrop of, ‘I fucked it up!’”

It’s a thrilling ride of a record, one that should land well in the hearts of fans of The 1975, Bring Me The Horizon, Pale Waves and Inhaler, and that speaks to the experience of being young, messing up, and figuring life out. They admit that they’ve been “subconsciously” writing music for stadiums, and there’s no reason why they shouldn’t make it there. They’ve got the songs and they’ve got the drive.

“That’s what we were reaching for,” admits Rooney. “When we started, we were yearning for an escape from Drogheda. You knew everyone in that town, and to picture us playing these songs to huge crowds of different people was a real escape.”

McCluskey reveals a more modest dream of “creative freedom and to be able to do this full time”, but that seems a given considering that their debut headline UK tour has sold out months in advance. The start of 2023 will see modernlove move to London as a new base to release the third EP. With a US agent already plotting their first tour Stateside, more packed-out headline shows and a heavy summer of festivals, the boys continue planning “an endless stream of music”. The numbers may be in their favour, but all that really matters to modernlove is making the connection and the love of doing it.

“We’ve found out that whenever we’re writing songs about our worst feelings and the shittest things that have happened to us, people are listening, investing in it and singing it back,” says Lally. “That connection and realisation that people are relating and sharing something with you means you never feel silly or wrong for feeling how you do. You’re not alone. We want to keep doing that. I just want all of my feelings to be mirrored by thousands of people!”

He adds: “None of us have any other interests or different paths. There is no plan B, no safety net. That’s not intentional; it’s just that our lives are absorbed by the band. We never questioned it. Aside from hanging out, drinking and partying, it’s the only thing on our minds every day.”

Crack open a drink, get on the dancefloor, make some mistakes, and prepare to fall head over heels for modernlove.