

GALANTIS

On June 8th, Galantis will release their debut album *Pharmacy* through Big Beat/Atlantic Records. With it, the duo of Christian Karlsson and Linus Eklöw realize their vision of bringing the craft of songwriting to modern dance music. Of course these 13 tracks are anthemic and transcendent, capable of lifting up any club or festival crowd, but at their heart they showcase two incredibly talented craftsmen who know what it takes to give a song depth and timelessness.

Pharmacy is an album about living a life with endless possibilities. It's a feel good record, but one with a twinge of sadness, encouraging listeners to leave behind a less fulfilling existence. The emotions are genuine and the sound is huge.

The world first got a sense of what Galantis was capable of in 2014, after their singles "Smile" and "You" from their self-titled EP were embraced by massively influential DJs including Pete Tong, Diplo, Tiesto, Porter Robinson and Laidback Luke. Galantis introduced themselves as a powerful live act that spring with a spot at the Coachella Music & Arts Festival, instantly winning over both the fans and the press.

But the story of Galantis really began several years earlier through two of Karlsson and Eklöw's other projects. In 2009, Karlsson's band Miiike Snow asked Eklöw, who produces and DJs as Style of Eye, to remix their song "Animal." After that, the two Swedes started hanging out in the studio together, playing each other songs and scraps of ideas. Explaining what drew him to Eklöw, Karlsson says, "He's an amazing programmer and designer of soundscapes. It was artsy, in a way. He was different."

There were many unfinished ideas that the pair fiddled with and then abandoned, but it wasn't until sometime in 2012 that things really came together, when they stopped the loop-based and software-centric approach common in modern dance music and switched to Karlsson's usual method of beginning a song on guitar or piano. The duo figured out their own approach—once they create a foundation with a simple arrangement, they build it up with stirring keyboards, monumental drums, imploring vocals and inventive flourishes. “We keep the song naked, and when we feel like we have the right one, we put some clothes on it and see how it feels,” says Karlsson.

The first composition they agreed upon was “Smile.” After that, their direction became clear. “We felt the urge to fill the dance world up with songs and with songwriting. That created our sound,” says Eklöv.

“We realized, this is Galantis, this is our band,” Karlsson adds.

Of course, Karlsson has previously had enormous success as a songwriter and producer for other artists. Working as Bloodshy, over the past decade he has collaborated with global pop superheroes including Madonna, Kylie Minogue, Katy Perry and Britney Spears, whose classic “Toxic” earned him a Grammy award. And though Eklöv's releases as Style of Eye have mainly been on dance labels like Ultra, Dirtybird and Sound Pellegrino, he actually began his career in music as an assistant to a major pop music producer in Sweden, so Galantis is a bit of a return for him. Also, in the midst of the duo ramping up, Eklöv found mainstream success on his own after producing Icona Pop's mega-smash, “I Love It.”

Galantis isn't Karlsson and Eklöv smashing their talents together, it's two artists blending what they already know in order to create something new. Karlsson may be the more recognized songwriter, and Eklöv may have more DJ experience to know what's going to work on the dancefloor, but they don't strictly divide the

work this way. Each one experiments in the other's area of expertise, then draws from his partner's knowledge to get the best results.

For *Pharmacy*, that meant spending many hours in studios in Los Angeles and the recording space they built together on a tiny island on an archipelago just outside of Stockholm, Sweden. These long studio sessions have become normal for the pair over the years. "That where we've been, that's where we are, that's where we live," says Karlsson. "There's no other way for us."

"Every day is different, but what's always there is this feeling that we know what the other one is thinking," says Eklöw of their collaborative relationship. "It's a wordless communication. It's almost like telepathy. You get it from being in the studio together for a long time, but we also share a lot of common interests in music."

But don't think that this obsessiveness drains the life from the music. Throughout these sessions both Karlsson and Eklöw were always dancing, jumping and screaming as the songs played. The fact that they shared this approach to making music is what made them realize they'd be great partners. "We are the same type of person in the studio," says Karlsson. "It's extremely high energy. We're very intense when we're creating, and finally I have someone who works like me."

You can feel that energy in *Pharmacy's* lead single "Runaway (U & I)," an ecstatic burst of dance pop escapism that has already become a beloved cut. But even such an instantly appealing song carries with it a level a complexity. Eklöw says it was one of the hardest compositions on the record to put together, as they had three different sets of vocals, existing in three different universes, which they then tweaked to create one greater sum.

Some of the ways that *Pharmacy* confounds what has become expected of dance music is even subtler. “In My Head” is based on a three-and-a-half bar loop, as opposed the standard four bar loop. The reason for this move is because it’s what the melody they came up with dictated, but the real challenge was to make the slight adjustment feel totally natural. Watch your feet and you can tell they succeeded.

While Galantis has found a sound that resonates with the modern dancefloor, they don’t intend to play it safe. Instead they will keep developing their sound and challenging listeners. They wanted *Pharmacy* to show the range in directions that this project could go to. Even the new single “Peanut Butter Jelly” is a bit of a departure for them. Using a sample from Bettye Swann, one of Karlsson’s favorite artists, and some heavily treated vocals, the song has the feel of an old soul disco record that has been sent on a warp speed journey to the future. As Karlsson says, “That was one of the destinations that we needed to go to.”

And we’re ready to follow, from the farthest reaches of space to the deepest depths of the sea.

###



Big Beat Records, 2015