



One summer's day a rock band decide to get on their motorbikes, drive out to the desert and film a music video. There's only a few issues – one of them has never driven a motorcycle, one of them is riding a Soviet Ural relic from the 1960s that keeps breaking down and...they're in Afghanistan.

White City were the first western-style rock band to play in post-Taliban Afghanistan. A motley mix of British journalist, Australian videographer and Swedish humanitarian worker came together in Kabul during the fall of 2009 in the shape of Ruth “Ru” Owen (vox, bass), Travis “Travka” Beard (guitar, FX) and Andreas “Andronik” Steffansson (drums, percussion).

Since their formation, White City have travelled all over Afghanistan and toured in ever country ending in 'stan, setting up to play wherever they can, whether that be in bunkers, embassies or in the middle of nowhere.

The first video from their debut album, 'Landlocked', due for release on February 16th is 'Perfect 10' - a wild trip through the dusty roads of Afghanistan. No security, no weapons, no plan except to ride to the soundtrack of their driving new single.

Says drummer, Andreas “Andronik” Steffansson of the shoot, “heading out of kabul into the wilderness in an old soviet-era ural bike with (singer) Ru attracted quite some attention and felt risky considering the conservative views that prevail in some rural areas to what women can and can't do. But we were met with truck-drivers smiling and waiving their hands, kids clapping hands and dancing by the side of the dusty roads, farmers getting off their donkeys and inviting us home for lunch and tea.”

As a woman and a novice bike rider, lead singer Ruth “Ru” Owen had an interesting experience. Riding around without a headscarf, flame-red hair blowing in the wind, she got a lot of attention from passing trucks. But it wasn't what you might have thought.

“Most people were cheering me on and clapping as I raced up and down the freeway. It was my first time on a motorbike and with that many people watching, it really encouraged me not to fall off.”

She also found that Afghans had mixed reactions to the shoot,

“As we were sitting round drinking tea with a local farmer and his sons, one of them asked how the male members of the band could 'allow' me to sing and dance in public like that. But then his brother countered by asking how it was different to the Bollywood videos he liked to watch.”

Guitarist Travis “Travka” Beard says the love of bikes really captures the imagination of Afghans. “They couldn't get enough of this old Ural bike with a sidecar, even though it broke down maybe fifteen times during the shoot. Many of the older guys remembered the model from the days of the Soviet invasion and kept offering to buy it!”

Travka is also a founder of the Kabul Knights Motorcycle Club – a band of Afghans and ex-pats joined together in the love of bikes. The band incorporated some of his club footage from an epic trip to the Minaret of Jam, the oldest Minaret in the country. He says nonchalantly, “It took us 6 days to get there and we crossed 8 provinces to do so. Quite an adventure.”

The band have been invited to showcase at SXSW in March and will kick off their first US tour in late February.

Perfect 10 is released on the 27th January 2014
whitecitykabul.com