



KENSINGTON

# Constantly raising their standards

Starting out as naive young men who firmly believed they would make it in the overcrowded music industry, Kensington has grown to become one of the most popular new bands in the Netherlands. Their catchy, up-tempo indie pop with heavy guitars stormed the Dutch music charts and stole the hearts of music-loving youngsters.

TEXT: JANINE STERENBORG | PHOTOS: PABLO DELFOS



Thanks to the hit songs *Streets* and *War*, Kensington's critically acclaimed album *Rivals* received platinum status in the Netherlands. Earlier this year the band toured throughout Europe and in November they will play at one of the largest music venues in the Netherlands. But first, the four will hit the European summer festivals. It sounds like they cannot fit any more in their schedule, but writing a new album is already on top of their minds as well.

### Europe-sized oil stain

During their tour in February they visited as many as eight countries, including Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Belgium and Hungary. Casper Starreveld, guitar player and second vocalist says: "It was our first step in many of those countries and we're looking forward to going back this summer. We're spreading over Europe like an oil stain!"

After spending nights in their van and hotels, Kensington is always happy to be back in their hometown of Utrecht. "Fans in Utrecht seem to be a tad more enthusiastic during shows, because they're proud we hail from their city," says Eloi Youssef, singer and guitar player. Recently they even played in Utrecht's main landmark and centuries old Dom tower. Youssef: "That place is the holy grail of Utrecht. We played in a chapel of the tower at midnight." This certainly was a unique opportunity, he describes: "The atmosphere was mysterious and intimate. And our music was supported by strings for the first time. It fitted very well and judging from the audience's response, it created a very moving sound."

### Slow and steady grow

Starting in 2005, the band was confident they carried gold, a confidence they now look back on with a slight sense embarrassment. Youssef: "I recently listened back to some old recordings. It is actually not that good. But we were naive, we always said we'd make it and didn't care for probabilities." In the last ten years, Kensington emerged from a local talent to the Netherlands' new favourite band. This slow and steady grow was good for their

development. Starreveld: "This way we had the chance to create a steady foundation for our music."

Kensington's upcoming show in the Ziggo Dome in November sold out within a few hours. The venue in Amsterdam is a huge concert hall with a central stage that can host a crowd of 17,000 people. "We were surprised it went so quickly. It didn't make sense to us!" Starreveld recalls. "Then we added an extra show. It sold out within two days. We're looking forward to playing there. Usually the crowd is in front of us, but at the Ziggo Dome they are all around. It's very exciting. But we will keep playing smaller stages, because we like the alternation."

### Indie pop to dance to

*Rivals* is Kensington's third and latest album released in late 2014. Despite constantly being compared to Britpop and rock bands such as Kings of Leon, U2, Editors and The Killers, Kensington found their own sound on this record; indie pop with a positive vibe, catchy lyrics and strong guitar riffs, that are also perfect to dance to at a summer festival.

The album is also a reflection of where Kensington is now. "It's definitely our best album so far," says Starreveld. "Its predecessor *Vultures* has a few flaws, like a too spread out bridge. On *Rivals*, the production and mixing all fell into place. The process went very smoothly as well and it was the most fun album to write. We gave each other space to fill in our own musical territories."

### Raising the ceiling

With milestones like a platinum album and playing at the revered Ziggo Dome, you might think Kensington has reached their top. But for this band there is always more to discover. "We feel we can always raise our ceiling," says Starreveld. "Across Dutch borders is a big area to explore. I would love to go on a night-liner tour through Europe some time. I love the displaced feeling of getting out of the bus and not knowing where I am." Bass player Jan Haker adds: "Touring is physically exhausting, but it's also what being in a band

is about. It's the most fun period and it generates the best memories." Starreveld: "I don't like knowing what I'll be doing next week on Wednesday morning. I love the unexpected."

Soon, Kensington will start writing a new album. We asked if this was something they look forward to. "It's always exciting," says Youssef, who continues a tad insecure. "Maybe the next one will flop, you never know." Focussing back on the band's goals, he knows exactly what he wants: "We want to renew ourselves. Not just for us, but for our fans too. And we aim to reach more and more people."



Photo: Rutger van der Bent

### Upcoming tour dates:

- 2 May, Gothardusfest, Gotha
  - 5 May, Bevrijdingsfestival Wageningen, Den Haag and Flevoland, Almere
  - 14 May, Dauwpop, Hellendoorn and Oerrock, Ureterp
  - 29 May, Muziekweekend Pesse, Pesse
- See [www.kensingtonband.com](http://www.kensingtonband.com) for tickets and more dates.