



By **Stephanie King**

Well, what do you know? Vampire Weekend's hotly anticipated second album actually lives up to the hype. In this slushy, chilly January, *Contra* is a ray of sunshine. Showcasing their trademark musical ventriloquism, sounding like Arctic Monkeys on

[Cousins](#)

, Animal Collective on

[California English](#)

, Clap Your Hands Say Yeah on

[Giving Up the Gun](#)

and, yes, Paul Simon, always, Vampire Weekend still manage to emerge sounding like themselves.

On an album full of good tracks, *Run* leaps out with its heart-tugging hooks and boundless enthusiasm. Beginning with a slurring guitar like a stylus sliding over vinyl, galloping jangly guitars and carnivalesque beat, *Run*'s easy rhythmic stride explodes into a chorus of fat street-party brass and eurobeat synths. Layered with feather-light drums, shimmering cymbals, lazy bass and a heavy dose of [soukous](#), Vampire Weekend's self-styled "Upper West Side Soweto" sound takes in British pop, Latin American samba, American college rock and the French Congo all in the first minute.

Midway through, the song is swept along by its excitable brass hook, leading into the cutesy but forgivable sing-along – *Cos honey with you-hoo-hoo-hoo/is the only way to go, And I could take two-hoo-hoo-hoo/but I really couldn't ever know/Honey, with you-hoo-hoo-hoo, And a battered radio, we could try!* – cajoling and cooing the melody into a layered, pulsing build-up of synths. Eventually *Run* grows delirious with its infectious optimism bursting into a fantastically energising 80s-pop riff

à

la

Depeche Mode's

[Just Can't Get Enough](#)

, collapsing into a final flowery brass serenade and ending with a decisive, battering drum roll.

All these lolloping guitars, climaxing and cascading trumpets, Ibiza-euphoric beats and anticipatory high-hat cymbals create a triumphant tune fit for sultry street parties and all-night summer raves. If the song wasn't so charming, listening to it in January would be masochistic. Instead, it's a delight; there's something good-natured in *Run* which moves Vampire Weekend beyond a lazy appropriation of South African 80s pop to an idealistic, inclusive sound.

Acknowledging the influence of their peers and combining current trends in chart music with their own voracious collection and absorption of diverse styles, Vampire Weekend have lifted indie above the tired formula of 4/4 beats, droney guitars and half-hearted nods to new-wave and punk. As [Stephenie Meyer](#) will confirm, vampires are still pretty hot right now, and this band's distinctly vampirical style adds weight to the old adage that talent borrows, but genius steals.