



tried to come up with new ways of combining instruments. Sometimes you get lucky, but sometimes you just do the same thing all over again.

**Has either of you run into a situation where you're over-thinking everything rather than allowing spontaneity to dictate the work?**

**LH:** Of course. For *What We Must*, we wanted to be spontaneous and not think too much. It's very important to keep spirits up that way.

**OR-L:** I sometimes have a hard time doing that with Mars Volta. It's hard to be totally spontaneous, because everything is so structured. But I think I find small ways to make the process spontaneous. Sometimes I'll limit myself to certain equipment, or even sabotage myself with problems that will force me to think in different ways.

**LH:** I think it's important to make it sound easy and not constructed, but still have enough details to sound impulsive.

**Does performing live offer respite from that?**

**OR-L:** Absolutely. For Mars Volta, performing live is a way to escape and counterbalance the constraints of structure. There is quite a bit of improvisation in our live show because it's everyone's time to speak and get away from the guidelines. For us, improvisation is the last true form of democratic expression. It's also a hot medium, whereas recording music is a cold medium. In the studio, you can be methodical, change the picture, twist things around over and over again until the writing is perfect and all the actors know their lines. But live performance is our theater. It's the moment where anything can happen, where the people forget their lines and have to make up new ones. It offers us a unique opportunity that I think other bands throw away.

**LH:** We try to reconstruct onstage what we've done in the studio, but still allow plenty of room for improvisation. For this tour, we're improvising much more. And I've seen Mars Volta play once in Oslo. Do you remember that concert, Omar?

**OR-L:** Was it the one we did just recently?

**LH:** No, the one before, about a year-and-a-half ago.

**OR-L:** Oh yeah, I know which one you're talking about.

**LH:** That seemed like a really improvised performance!

**OR-L:** [Laughs] They're always changing, and much of it depends on the