

# Glimpse Trio

## BIOGRAPHY

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MUSIC

December 28, 2011

## Garage Origins of Glimpse Trio

Or, how two free-jazz musicians found their voices in rock.

By Rachel Swan [@rachelswan](#)



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Like so many musicians who came before them, singer-guitarist Mike Sopko and drummer Hamir Atwal spend most of their time in a dark, cold, cluttered, garage — in this case in San Leandro. It isn't exactly conducive to hanging out. For one thing, the building — which lies adjacent to Sopko's small suburban house with its Christmas lights on the doorstep and its Chagall painting over the fireplace — is not very well insulated, except for some garbage bags bunched into the walls for sound-proofing. And

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it's not well lit, save for the fluorescents on the ceiling.

That said, it's got enough accoutrements to satisfy two experimental musicians for hours, and to allow them to mint nearly a dozen songs a week for their band, Glimpse Trio. One is a small laptop computer with ProTools. Another is a guitar painted in red-and-white zig-zags, to replicate the one used by Eddie Van Halen. The third is the giant pedal board on the floor, which Sopko describes in as much delicious detail as would a poet praising the features of his favorite muse.



BROOKE SOPKO

Glimpse Trio.

At Bottom of the Hill (1233 17th St., San Francisco) on Thursday, Jan. 5. 9 p.m., \$8. [BottomoftheHill.com](http://BottomoftheHill.com)

"It's like a pedal board that you put your stomp boxes on," he said proudly. "And this," he said, picking up another nondescript, boxy doodad, "is a processor. We use this for recording. But live, these are all individual things." His voice suddenly dropped to a low, conspiratorial register. "This is what's so cool about this — check this out," he said, leaning in close as he gathered up all the wires and circuits and pedals that compose the vast piece of gadgetry. He slipped them all beneath a lid, clamped it shut, and held the thing up as though it were a briefcase. "I can put it on a plane, I could do whatever, it's got wheels — your cords don't get fucked up." He smiled triumphantly.

Sopko gets inordinately excited whenever the talk turns to gear, or music for that matter. He speaks at a fast clip, usually on a crescendo, barely pausing for breath between sentences. Bearded, bespectacled, and prone to laugh nervously — more as a punctuation mark than a show of amusement — he nonetheless has the intensity of a true zealot, someone who will spend upward of eight hours a day sequestered in a garage, because his labor of love is more love than labor. A tour through that garage is tantamount to perusing a kid's entire baseball card collection: Every part is sacred, no matter how inconsequential it might appear to a visitor. That even goes for the many species of snare drum that litter Sopko's floor: piccolo snare, deep aim snare, mahogany snare, maple snare.

Ironically, the music that Sopko makes with Atwal has none of the characteristics you'd expect from someone whose normal speech patterns

Trio

exceed 150 beats per minute, and whose last band bore the name Monster Cock Rally. Combining the abstract harmonies of free jazz with the pulsing backbeat of indie rock, it's intricate and surprisingly patient. Part of that might owe to Atwal, who is calm and unassuming and has a way of quietly shaping any artistic project he enters. He studied jazz at Berklee College of Music, and says a lot of his rhythmic concepts are steeped in that idiom. But the sound of Glimpse Trio — which also features Jym Murry on bass — probably has a lot to do with their compositional process, as well. Often, Sopko will come up with a part and Atwal will refine it either by contorting the melody or shifting the groove. Their intense partnership has generated some of the best and most complicated music to emerge from a garage band this year, even if it resists all the attributes we associate with "garage." It might even catch on.



That's no small feat, considering how unintentionally geeky and high-art these guys are — and not in an ironic way, either. Classically trained, they both had omnivorous tastes from a young age — Sopko said he skipped from Bon Jovi cassette tapes to Ornette Coleman — and they met two years ago

through friends in the improvised jazz scene. At that time, Atwal was playing in a bass-less jazz trio (sax, keyboard, and drums), and Sopko was in a guitar-bass duo, sans percussion. He had roughly two albums' worth of tunes already socked away on his computer. It seemed like a perfect fit.

In only a year of operating as a group, Glimpse Trio already has two albums in its catalogue, a West Coast tour under its belt, and aborted relationships with two bass players — for logistical reasons rather than personality differences, the band members say. It's also shifted from the sort of free-jazzy approach that informed its debut, 1985, to something more punky and riff-driven (not for nothing is its second album, due early next year, titled *Garage*), and more recently to a foray into downtempo electronica. Over the past couple weeks, Sopko and Atwal have holed up in their garage with Anticon producer Dosh. Among the fruits of their labor is an

uncharacteristically warm lullaby for a friend about to have a baby.

Sopko cued it up on his laptop last Wednesday, and a viscous major-key melody burbled through the otherwise dank air of the garage. He nodded excitedly. "I'm so psyched about this," he said, leaning toward the computer screen like a kid peering into the glass wall of an aquarium. "Fuzzy feeling, you know?" he said, glancing back for approval. Atwal smiled, which only excited Sopko further. "It's totally different, you know?"

And it was, even when the first bit of distortion screeched through, and a buzz-saw sound effect sullied the near-perfect melody. Even while exploring the cleanest, warmest recesses of their personality, Sopko and Atwal couldn't help but introduce a little dissonance.

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1233 17th St. **SAN FRANCISCO**

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Glimpse  
Trio

# EAST BAY EXPRESS



**Glimpse Trio**, 1985. The word "psychedelic" might be too sedate for this trio, which teeters between garage rock and hard-edged experimental jazz. **Mike Sopko** handles the electric guitar, along with most compositional duties. **Hamir Atwal** is one of the most conscientious drummers around, and it's cool to hear him rock out for a change. His patterns lock in with the rat-a-tat-tat guitar lines on "Joey," to blistering effect. The mood shifts completely on "2060," which is actually a country ballad. (self-released)

At The Bistro (1001 B St., Hayward) on Thursday, Dec. 23. 8 p.m., free.

Dan Hicks



Glimpse  
Trio

# Glimpse Trio to Jam Santa Monica TRiP

PARIMAL M. ROHIT  
STAFF WRITER

George Orwell had "1984." Glimpse Trio is pushing "1985," the self-produced, self-released debut album of the Oakland-based rock group. No, you do not have to read Orwell's "1984" in order to hear Glimpse Trio's "1985." Instead, the best way for Santa Monicaans to take in the album's music is to watch the rock group perform it live at the TRiP on Lincoln Boulevard just south of Pico Boulevard on Thursday, Sept. 15.

Glimpse Trio is literally comprised of a trio of musicians in guitarist Mike Sopko, drummer Hamir Atwal, and vocalist-guitarist Jym Murry, all three of whom have ventured from their Bay Area roots to promote "1985."

As they prepare to entertain Southern California audiences here next week, the members of Glimpse Trio took a moment to speak with *The Mirror* as they were en route from Boise, Ida., to Salt Lake City, Utah.

Rest assured, the driver of the vehicle did not speak to this writer as he was actually operating his automobile. Yet, Sopko,

Murry, and Atwal were all excited to be making their respective way southwest down Interstate 15 and eventually arriving in Santa Monica to perform at the TRiP.

The group will be bringing a unique style of rock music into town next week. While technically a rock band, one can easily argue Glimpse Trio's music is genre bending.

"We're a three piece that's mostly rock driven," Murry told *The Mirror*. "Predominantly we're rock, but it's rock with jam and everything. We're very high energy. It's all about being in the moment with the music."

Perhaps Murray was being modest, as Glimpse Trio's music also features noticeable elements of jazz, blues, punk, metal, and folk. Much of the smorgasbord of musical flavors stems from the diverse background of each band member. Sopko, for example, has been proclaimed to have the "fastest hands west of the Mississippi" while Atwal, an alumnus of the Berklee College of Music, is a trained jazz drummer.

Meanwhile, Murry studied classical guitar, voice, and music theory at Chabot College in Hayward, Calif.

According to the group's website, Glimpse Trio "is looking to redefine the rock/jam-band scene through staggering live performances and recordings."

"We're like a Jimi Hendrix experience, with a little bit of Metallica and Phish and Minute Man," Murry said.

Murry added the group will be touring various venues across the western United States with 30 songs in tow, with the band rotating songs in and out with each performance. Accordingly, each show on the tour will feature a different combination of songs.

"We will mix it up. The improv sections are always different, but it's not freestyle improv. It's improv with structure, and it's always actually thematic," Murry said as Sopko could be heard in the background echoing similar thoughts.

Original conceived in 2006 by Sopko in Cleveland, Ohio, under the name "MCR," Glimpse Trio evolved into being as he searched for the perfect band mates. Atwal and Murry eventually proved to be the perfect men for the job.

Sopko, the group's front man, said the name "Glimpse Trio" came about because

he felt the band would literally give audiences a "glimpse" into a different mental state through its music.

"We wanted to name the band Glimpse but it was already taken. Since there are three of us we added the word 'trio,'" he candidly said. "It's giving access, a 'glimpse,' to a bigger picture, even if it's just for one second."

Ultimately, Glimpse Trio's music is as eclectic as its band members, and their diversity of range is sure to be entertaining for all those who can make it out to the TRiP.

The TRiP is located at 2101 Lincoln Boulevard. Doors open at 6 p.m. on Sept. 15; in addition to Glimpse Trio, other groups performing that evening include City of Blue, Heart Pharmacy, Ricky Small, Corey Cottrell, and others.

For more information on ticket prices and other show details, contact the TRiP at 310.396.9010, or visit its [www.tripsantamonica.com](http://www.tripsantamonica.com).

Contact Parimal M. Rohit  
[Parimal@smmirror.com](mailto:Parimal@smmirror.com)



BY FRANK ALKYER

**Glimpse Trio, 1985** (self-released)

1985 is the self-produced debut recording from the Oakland-based Glimpse Trio. Comprising guitarist Mike Sopko, bassist Ethan Rider and drummer Hamir Atwal, Glimpse puts the power in power trio. On 1985, the group delivers a furious blend of rock, jazz, blues, punk and metal fused with infectious folksiness. Sopko serves a stellar front man—lightning fast and full of technique and wit on guitar. Rider and Atwal provide Glimpse's glue, locking in with incredible rhythmic drive, nuance and interplay. Of the 13 tracks on 1985, nine are instrumentals. Tunes like "Headache," "Joey" and "A Little Dirt" are head-bobbing, throw-your-fist-in-the-air fun. But the group also shows a softer side with touching instrumental ballads like "Charles" and "Stiles." Of the record's four songs with lyrics, "Time To Be Your Man" is a slam-dance, pick hit. Just to be clear, this isn't a jazz record, but it's an amazing document of eclectic improvisation. Sopko and Rider have toured with post-punk bass genius Mike Watt and drummer supreme G. Calvin Weston, two artists who never shied away from genre-bending music. Atwal has toured with Greg Osby and other free-thinking jazz bandleaders. In short, all three come by this eclecticism honestly. For those who grew up on the great fusion explorers, Glimpse Trio offers up a next generation. For those who like improvisation with a slice of punk, slacker and metal attitude, it's got to be 1985.

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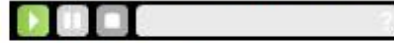
Glimpse  
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# GLIMPSE TRIO

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## LISTEN TO GLIMPSE TRIO:



## "HEADACHE"

### ABOUT GLIMPSE TRIO:

Consisting of three of the most intense, musically diverse, and improvisationally savvy musicians of their era, the Glimpse Trio "extreme jam band" has been described by L.A. Weekly as "Oakland's dark

kings of avant-metal colossalness."

Captivating and all-out riveting, GT strives to spontaneously create engaging music that approaches the unknown and borders on the psychedelic.

Cleveland native Mike Sopko, known to have the "fastest hands west of the Mississippi," is, according to renowned guitarist Marc Ribot, "conceptually, one of a very few people who can really play." In 2006, Sopko's band, MCR, toured with celebrated frontman Mike Watt and legendary drummer G. Calvin Weston, as well recording with Weston. Most recently, Sopko was featured on Dosh's latest single, "Subtractions," on Anticon Records.

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GT is looking to redefine the rock/jam-band scene through staggering live performances and recordings. With the release of "1985," their first full-length, studio release, they are now seeking labels for distribution and touring opportunities.



Find them at [www.glimpsetrio.com](http://www.glimpsetrio.com); [www.twitter.com/glimpsetrio](http://www.twitter.com/glimpsetrio)  
[www.facebook.com/glimpsetrio](http://www.facebook.com/glimpsetrio); and [www.itunes.com/glimpsetrio](http://www.itunes.com/glimpsetrio)

*Glimpse Trio is featured in the April, 2011 Status Hat - TOOLS.*

# STATUS HAT MUSIC PAGE - APRIL, 2011

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In this month's "Tools" issue we have three more musical acts to share with you.

First we have two classical compositions from **Dylan Fixmer**. These pieces are nice examples of contemporary music with definite classic influences. Performed by the Fixmer Quartet, it is so refreshing to hear a well rounded young musician dig into his tool bag and grace us with such timeless music.

Next we have "*Headache*" from Oakland's **Glimpse Trio**. If the soundtrack from my head spilled out, this would be a track for sure. The driving and powerful instrumental is not for the meek, and how! The guitar, bass and drums pound away like a frantic bear in heat, invoking a passion for jamming that is evident. Not Jazz, not rock, this song is akin to King Crimson at it's heaviest, an exciting and frantic journey not to be missed.



Glimpse  
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## Glimpse Trio

Posted by BandSoup at 2:33 PM Labels: Band Spotlight, Instrumental, Jam Band, Live Performance, Rock, Video



Glimpse Trio are an awesome band from San Leandro, California that fuse numerous genres together with a steady stream of fantastic guitar work and instrumentation. Here are a few live videos from the band to get a feel for their sound and ethos, as well as some background information and linkage.



## Band Soup Continued ..

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PHOTO/RUSS WRIGHT.NET

San Leandro band Glimpse Trio will play at The Englander Pub next Saturday night.

## Local Band to Perform Downtown

Local band the Glimpse Trio is hitting the road to promote their new CD "1985" and they're playing here in town next Saturday night.

The band specializes in a creative and unique blend of musical styles including rock, jazz, blues, punk, and metal

The trio is made up of veteran musicians Mike Sopko, Hamir Atwal, and Jym Murry.

Guitarist Sopko was born in Cleveland and claims to have "the fastest hands west of the Mississippi." He's played with bands including MCR and Dosh.

Drummer Atwal is a Bay Area native and attended the prestigious Berklee College of Music. He has played with jazz bands all over the country, including gigs in Chicago and New York.

Murry plays classical guitar and also is a talented vocalist. He studied music theory at Chabot College in Hayward and sang in chamber, jazz, and a capella choirs at Chabot and UC Santa Cruz.

The band has played many shows all over the Bay Area, including the Great American Music Hall and the DNA Lounge in San Francisco and the Sausage and Suds Fest here in San Leandro.

The Glimpse Trio has gigs

lined up all over the West Coast this month – from Portland to Phoenix – to promote the album, but they often return to their home base at The Englander Pub in downtown San Leandro.

Their next show in San Leandro is at The Englander at 101 Parrott Street on Sept. 17 at 8 p.m.

The band's web site is [www.glimpsetrio.com](http://www.glimpsetrio.com).

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