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(Clockwise from left)
Yttling,
Eriksson,
and Morén

In the Studio

PETER BJORN AND JOHN

EW hangs with the band behind "Young Folks" as they pen their next CD—only to find them swapping instruments and honoring the LAPD

"Doesn't this sound like the theme from *CSI: Miami*?" chuckles Peter Bjorn and John drummer John Eriksson while playing a ratty synthesizer. Thanks to the surprise hit "Young Folks," the three indie rockers from Sweden spent last year whistling while they worked their way around the world—which explains why they're giddy to be tinkering with new gear in the studio. "After touring so long, we got bored with our instruments," says guitarist-producer Björn Yttling. "And I don't like stuff that's well tuned or with no flaws. I'm more into getting a bunch of crappy sounds together and making it great."

The trio traveled 5,500 miles from Stockholm to L.A.'s nondescript San Fernando Valley to start composing the follow-up to 2007's ominously titled *Writer's Block*. (They borrowed studio space from producer Thom Monahan, who happens to be this reporter's husband.) "It's inspiring to be in a new environment," says Eriksson, "and not working in Björn's basement." That change of scenery boosted their productivity—they penned nine songs in three days—and lent way to a new sound, driven by a game of musical chairs. "I [temporarily] went to drums, John to guitar, and we added more synths," says Yttling, hinting at their mild flirtation with the '80s. (Bassist Peter Morén, whose solo CD, *The Last Tycoon*, drops April 8, sat out the interview...to nurse a hangover.) "This is the crucial moment for a record," he adds, "when you decide [in which direction] to go."

Now that they've sown these aural oats, the group will begin the recording process back in their homeland. But they'll always have L.A. "Maybe the album title could be about this cop with a mustache," Yttling muses, giving a shout-out to the LAPD. "We could call it *Mustachio*." —SH