

PopCulture



COURTESY OF ANTON CORBIJN
Win Butler (seated) and The Arcade Fire open for U2 at the Bell Centre tonight and Monday in their last shows promoting their remarkable debut album, *Funeral*.

The Unforgettable Fire

Out of nowhere, Montreal indie band The Arcade Fire has become a phenomenon in little more than a year

T'CHA DUNLEVY
GAZETTE MUSIC CRITIC

Win Butler looks away when he talks – up and to the side, about 45 degrees, his eyes glassy and his tone reflective. When he finishes a thought, he turns and looks at me, his face blank, and he waits.

There is no pretense, no artifice, but an unadorned immediacy. It's disconcerting at first, until I realize it's just his way. It's real.

A tad serious, but tangible, and honest. Somewhere in there is a 25-year-old man who, with a little help from his friends, has made one of the most urgent, emotional and inspiring rock records in recent memory.

What a year. Just 14 months ago, nobody knew The Arcade Fire. Not David Bowie, not David Byrne, Coldplay, U2 or you. And nobody was talking about a Montreal music scene.

A mere 14 months later, Butler, Régine Chassagne and their band have all but conquered the world.

They are indie rock royalty, having performed alongside their icons (Bowie and Byrne), toured the planet, appeared in most major music publications, and garnered an ever-growing following.

Last week – as The Arcade Fire prepared to play the final three shows for its *Funeral* album, all opening for U2 (yesterday in Ottawa, today and Monday at the Bell Centre) – Butler sat in a Mile End café and, with distracted serenity, put things in perspective.

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U2: not quite that old-time religion, but close

Some people still think rock is the devil's music, but listening to Bono tell it, you get the idea that God figures in the mix

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