

Interview for Rock Delux

Hi Simon,

This is the interview for Rockdelux magazine

Cheers,

Coque

Bitter Springs Q & A

You're playing Pocket Club on next month. Are you aware you're a cult band here in Spain? How does it feel?

a = great I couldn't think of a better place to be a cult band although I'm told we are a bit of a cult in New York and Greece as well nice to know someone's listening .

With so much music in the world today (good and bad) we are grateful that anyone is choosing to take an interest in ours .

To quote one of my own lyrics

(From the song simple life. on the five die filming this lazy lark LP)

"you go where there's a welcome"

You kicked ass in BAM festival some years ago. Though you looked a little drunk on that gig. Do you remember anything?

a = I'm glad you think we kicked ass I don't think people expected us to sound as we did I think they thought we would be more acoustic oriented as for being drunk its more a case of adrenalin kicking in.

but it's funny that you say that because back in my school days my football coach always assumed I was taking drugs

but no I'd say this is me naturally

the bam festival it was a great festival and our 1st time in Barcelona we loved the experience that's why we are so pleased to be coming to play again

I remember everything about the gig . We played tip the balance (from the suburban crimes lp) for the 1st time and we hadn't rehearsed it. Keeps things fresh... We have never played the same set twice in over 20 years

Both as bitter springs and before that as last party.

Our gigs are usually more electrifying affairs than the records we just throw ourselves right in there. The records tend to be more reflective

"That Sentimental Slush" looks like your most satisfying record to date. Not just because is the longest one, but also due to its diversity and the truly excellent sound of the whole thing. Did you put

a particular effort in it?

a = as it happens we always put maximum effort in to all the records sometimes to the detriment of our own personal lives .this was particularly the case with the previous lp suburban crimes of every happiness I thought it should have set the world on fire but in the end I don't think many people even got to hear it. It was a big blow for us and I took it really badly . When mojo magazine didn't run a review I wrote to them a month later and said that should put it in their lost treasures feature .

that's why sentimental slush has taken so long to finish confidence was low plus I just didn't want to put another record out and let it disappear and when Darren at cargo suggested we put it out on our own label (Harvey records) I thought yeah why not I knew it meant doing everything myself but at least I would know I'd done everything within my power to let people know it was out there things like this interview will let people know the record exists and they can make up their own mind whether they like it or not we have always had diverse tastes within the band and love lots of different styles of music I think that initially this made it hard for people to get into our music but I think it's served us well in the long run .

There are in fact 15 more songs recorded which we couldn't fit on the album

If I had my way it would have everything on it. 2 cds making it a comprehensive document of the last few years since suburban crimes ,warts and all

we are going to do an ep of 4 new songs soon probably called the FIRM FAMILY FAVOURITES E.P a more upbeat collection featuring ,I Know It's Not What You Wanted , Hugh Grant (holy joy song with jock Scott on lead vocals) The Taming Of The Dogs and Available In All Formats (song title not a marketing trick) and the rest of the songs will probably go towards the next lp

I did notice that this is also the most direct album to date, where the other ones seemed more obscure or oblique.

a = do you think so... I think maybe there is an unconscious thing within any band where as you make each LP as little like the last one as possible. Certainly looking back at our six albums that seems to be the case I like to think we haven't made the same LP twice. As for oblique I often think lyric wise I have a tendency to explain too much.

The album is deep as a good book. The stories are so good they hurt. At the time of writing, do you get more inspiration from 'normal' writers than from songwriters?

a = what a lovely question. I get inspiration from everywhere sometimes I'll even be sleeping and a song will say "wake up rivers and write me" I don't believe the song format should have any boundaries or restrictions subject matter can be anything and I'll rule nothing out I try not make things up The truth in life is pretty bloody strange enough as it is. some of the songs have more in common with films or books I'll work hard to get the small details right like with thought or conversation within a song

Sometimes I'll see my role like a method actor but in song writing terms .
whoever I'm singing as be it myself or another character I'll make sure that there's
no difference .

I have more in common with say a director like mike Leigh or curb your
enthusiasm's Larry David and writers like Jeannette winterson and Russell
hoban and Tim Lott than I do with popular groups like razorlight the arctic monkeys
and Kaiser chiefs . But there are writers in music which I love and take inspiration
from those writers that show us all how it should be done such as the mael brothers
(Sparks) mark smith Bob Dylan, Nina Simone, Morrissey. Nick cave, Leonard
Cohen, Edith Piaf, Randy Newman, Tom waits, Serge Gainsborough, Neil young, the
kind of artists who's music seems inseparable from their lives that's what I aspire to
achieve with the Bitter springs .great writing can and should exist in music there are
no excuses for being lazy

In your lyrics there are subtle hints of humour amidst
the desperation. In this sense you remind me of some
old fellas of label - The Montgolfier Brothers.

a = most of what I write has humour in it I love dark comedy and I suppose
it could be called gallows humour
we have shows in England like the stuff Chris Morris has done and Steve
Cogan and little Brittan the fast show these have sketches and stuff
where I recognise some of the themes from bitter springs songs such as the
ridiculousness of every day situations and the ludicrous views people cling to.
The Montgolfier brothers yes I love their new record all my bad thoughts
they are northern lads and we are southern and they are very dry. Mark
tranmer did the music for beautiful things on our LP they only eat chips ha ha ha

It seems like massive success just passes you by - and
that's unfair. Please mention some possible reasons
for it.

a = success what is success? To me success is making a great song
And affecting someone with it. I like to hear a song which tells me something I might
not otherwise have thought about. As for popular success we wouldn't for instance
change an expletive in a song just to have it played on radio.
Also if we knew what people liked about us then we might be tempted to try and
reproduce that all the time ... and then we would be coldplay or Travis or any number
of careerist musicians and bands

Could it be due to the tainted and crude realism of
your lyrics? It seems you explain everything as it is,
something not really nice to hear now and then.

A = it could be I suppose but I'm not really interested in massive success
It's not good for anyone

how did the collaboration of cult figure Vic Goddard in
"Slush" come up?

a = we do a lot of stuff together

He did a duet with me on Boormans son from our first LP (from the parish of arthritis) and we have worked together ever since for the last couple of years in tandem with working on the slush lp we have been playing shows and recording as subway sect .hopefully vics label (motion records) will issue the recordings collectively known as Blackpool sometime soon. We got Vic to do the ghostly voice in follow your heart. I wrote and sang turn your back on everyone on Vic's last LP (sansend)

Do you have any particular favourite song from your last album? And why that particular one?

a = do you mean slush or suburban crimes? I'll pick one from each any way
From suburban crimes I'd have to go with vagina trees with penis leaves it's a long song but I think we managed to keep it interesting all the way through
And on sentimental slush I'll go for music it's a young mans game it was one of the 1st to be finished and I don't think anyone has written a song like that before

Please tell us about your recent fave records.

a = Lhasa / the living road / that's a great album and ive just bought another of hers called la llorona the Montgolfier brothers all my bad thoughts that's a beauty
The go team thunder lightning strike is excellent. The fall's fall heads roll lp is the fall at their best the kings of Leon aha shake heartbreak that's a favourite with me and my 12 year old son Charlie and I have just got a great couple of albums by Paolo conte
And bobby Womack's looking for a love compilation. The springs have recorded his Harry hippie for future release oh and I have just got a cd called mark wirtz and the teenage opera which I only got for one particular song the very beautiful excerpt from a teenage opera

How's your BCN concert going to be like? Any ideas on the setlist yet?

a = as I mentioned earlier we never play the same set twice
Which I hope goes towards making every show for a unique experience
We will be playing some songs from the new lp and we have rehearsed miracle on high st and stop the world which were released in Spain on an ep through accuarrella records so it's possible those 2 songs will be in the set . But it's never finalised until the last possible moment

that's all by now, fellas. And thanks again for collaborating on "Songs for the Blue Times" compilation a long long time ago!

a = the pleasure was all ours
All the best ..Simon

Ps the band are taking some new photo's this weekend we shall send some hopefully in time for the piece .

Thanks

Cheers!
Jm

"It's good, isn't it? Having the team back together again." - Arvin Sloane

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