



BMX Bandits

Dreamers On The Run

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BMX Bandits are back with their twelfth studio album, their most musically ambitious so far - 'Dreamers On The Run'. An album dedicated to all the outsiders out there.

BMX Bandits were formed in the Scottish ex industrial town of Bellshill in 1985 by Douglas T Stewart and Sean Dickson. When Sean left to concentrate on his other band The Soup Dragons so began BMX Bandits, not as a conventional band of the same 4 or 5 faces but as an ever growing extended musical family which has included members of The Vaselines, The Pastels, The Pearlfishers and Teenage Fanclub over the years.

In 2014 Douglas formulated the idea for a new BMX Bandits album that would be called 'Dreamers on the Run', about living in two worlds; the world of dreams and of music while trying to survive the real world. Douglas started writing songs for the new album and even booked a couple of shows to perform these new Dreamers songs live. Then Douglas got ill, his mental health spiralled out of control and this led to physical health problems. The project was put on hold, the planned live shows and recording were cancelled. During lockdown Douglas was commissioned to provide the soundtrack for an independent feature film 'Dreaded Light'. For this project Douglas chose multi instrumentalist Andrew Pattie to be his main collaborator. Andrew had been playing guitar live for the band for a few years. Douglas recalls "After recording an actual soundtrack for an actual movie together it became obvious to me that Andrew was the right collaborator to make this very cinematic album that I'd dreamt of. He had the musicality and fearlessness that it needed."

So now, ten years later than originally planned 'Dreamers on the Run' is here. "Together we worked on some of the song ideas and themes that I had a decade ago, completing them together and both of us wrote new material that complemented the album's narrative." The album was mastered by Douglas' original partner in crime Sean Dickson, now known as Hifi Sean and features guest appearances by giants of the International Pop Underground Jowe Head and Calvin Johnson.

The album's opener 'Dreamers on the Run' was the first song that Douglas had heard in his head for the album. "I had the intro section and the big romantic hook section. From there I wanted it to be like a score for a montage section in a film with our two dreamers running through different landscapes and times and that's where Andrew came in with something that was full of musical twists and turns. It felt like it would take the listener on a journey and introduce them to some elements that would return throughout the album. Andrew cites David Axelrod's extraordinary work with The Electric Prunes on 1968's 'Release of an Oath' as a key influence on the mid section of the track "funky drums with classical themes". Then after this winding journey we return to our dreamers, defiantly restating their declaration of intent. They are saying no matter how long we have to keep on running, no matter how treacherous the journey we won't be defeated by the real world."

'Setting Sun', the first single from the album, was written by Andrew. Ironically it is the track that feels closest to the classic Scottish harmony led guitar pop BMX Bandits were recording for Creation Records back in the early 1990s. Andrew was a toddler in the 1990s and so it's no retread of previously travelled territory. It could be called Sunshine Pop but it has a definite dark underbelly. Andrew remembers; "Setting Sun" was written around the time I met Douglas (2010/11) and was written as an ode to classic Glasgow indie pop. The lyrics deal with the feeling of loneliness and confusion after a long relationship that I was in. My mental health was also declining but I was starting to see that there was a positive horizon ahead of me." A key point in BMX Bandits is even when they come out of dark or difficult times there is always an element of hope.

'Time To Get Away' is a musical conversation with a friend who has been worn down by 21st Century worries and pressures. Douglas has previously spoken of how songs can be good friends for people and this song offers love and care and empathy to any listeners feeling in need. BMX Bandits are the band who care. The end of the song features the haunting sound of Amanda Nizic on musical saw.

'What He Set Out To Be' is another of the songs from ten years ago. It's a song of loss and regret warning the listener not to make the same mistakes as the subject of the song or as its narrator. There is clear echoes of the more melancholy side of the late sixties classic A&M mellow pop feel with a lush string arrangement and solo flute from Andrew.

'Cockerel's Waiting' is in part a cowboy song that tips its Stetson to Gene Autry and Laurel & Hardy's Way Out West but also features a spooky travelling sideshow snake oil salesman and preacher played by Jowe Head of Swell Maps and the Television Personalities. Andrew and Douglas both cite Jowe's 1983 solo album 'Pincer Movement' as one of their all time favourites and a huge influence on this album. Douglas says "Jowe was one of the first people that I sent BMX Bandits first demo tape to in 1985 and his continuing support and friendship means so much to us. When we came up with this character we knew it needed to be Jowe." The song's chorus was written by a 17 year old Andrew after he had just finished watching The Last Waltz for the first time. The music lay dormant until this perfect opportunity to use it. Andrew and Douglas constructed the track to take us on a sonic trip through a West that never really was, to the moon and ultimately, back to where we came in.

Side two of the album begins with 'My Name is Douglas'. Douglas remembers "growing up in a rough and depressed town. If you were different, if you stood out, you became a target for ridicule, verbal abuse and even violence. Sean, Norman (Teenage Fanclub) and I stood out. We felt like outsiders in our own town and so we created our own alternative world of music and dreams. I wasn't a typical boy and throughout my teens and right on through my twenties people would call me a poof, a pansy, a weirdo and say "you're not quite right." Fortunately I had the arrogance of youth on my side and all the negative attention only encouraged me to be a more extreme version of me. I wore the disapproval as a badge of honour and realised the things that made me not quite right in their eyes were like my superpowers. I think it's tougher now and so I wanted to write something to say don't listen to the bullies and the naysayers. Listen to the people who love you. Being different makes you special, unique and precious." Being outsiders, never feeling you truly fit in is a major theme of the album.

'Home Before Dark' was originally recorded by Woody Guthrie's daughter Nora in 1967 and written for her by her teenage boyfriend. Douglas; "It is such a beautiful mournful song of the outsider. I instantly connected with it." BMX Bandits have taken the song and put it into a darker more unsettling setting.

'Hop, Skip, Jump (For Your Love)' is another of the earliest Dreamers songs. Musically inspired by Bo Diddley, who shares his birthday with Douglas, and turn of the Century European new wave pop. In the second verse we find ourselves briefly transported to a medieval landscape that we visited earlier on the album's opener. This track has already established itself as a big fan favourite at live shows.

Andrew's song 'The World Was Round' celebrates the healing properties of love and music. The song's message is that in a world where truth is hard to come by let love be the thing that anchors us all. Andrew says "This song again deals with deep sadness and depression and the confusion I often feel about interacting with the world. Love is important to ground you. Im very lucky to have a stable and loving partner. This song is for Alexis." Musically there are nods to Womack and Womack, classic Motown vocal groups and Todd Rundgren. It features a classic soul tinged pop string arrangement and a killer guitar solo from Andrew.

For 'The Things You Threw Away' Douglas worked with New York based musician and arranger Jay Jay Lozano who leads the group Adventures in Rhythm. Douglas knew Jay Jay was a fellow fan of classic American musicals of the past and old romantic songs from the 1930s by writers like Hoagy Carmichael, Ray Noble and Frank Churchill. Douglas "Those unashamed ultra romantic songs of the thirties and those very detailed illustrative and emotional arrangements have always been a big part of what I listen to and what inspires me. Jay Jay and I listened to around 50 or 60 of these kind of recordings, we lived in that musical world of the past and found the direction for this song that I had been walking around singing to myself for years. So many of these songs are like mini movies in my mind, we can see the characters, the setting for the scenes and we want to bring them to life through our music."

Douglas explains the album's closer 'Digital Dreamers'; "Andrew has all of these talents, playing multiple instruments, writing and arranging and singing that he brought to this album and on the final cut of the album we embraced another of his facets. He repairs, rebuilds and adapts classic games consoles and so we thought we could put our dreamers into a retro futuristic game landscape. Life and love is a game and so we return to a variation on one of the themes from our opening track and leaves the dreamers, our children and listeners with a brief but sincere little blessing - "Sleep safe my love."

Tracklist

- A1) Dreamers On The Run
- A2) Setting Sun
- A3) Time To Get Away
- A4) What He Set Out To Be
- A5) Cockerel's Waiting
- B1) My Name Is Douglas (Don't Listen To What They Say)
- B2) Home Before Dark – In The Industrial Zone
- B3) Hop Skip Jump (For Your Love)
- B4) The World Was Round
- B5) Things You Threw Away
- B6) Digital Dreamers

Tracklist Bonus-7"

- A1. Setting Sun (Single Version with Intro)
- A2. Your Class (Even More Dreams Version)
- B1. Home Before Dark (Even More Dreams Version)
- B2. Come Dance With Me



Promotion

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