FROM ZEROES TO HEROES

Every moment we spend together is a departure from reality", deadpans **Heroes of Switzerland** drummer, Matt Power.

Playful jesting aside, however, conversation meanders increasingly toward the realms of artistic escapism, veering, on more than one occasion, into utter (and frequently hilarious) abstraction. And despite having evolved drastically both in terms of sound quality and line-up, the aforementioned escapist ethic remains an enduring influence for the Nottingham-based melodic rock quartet.

"The tunes were always there", affirms frontman, Ian Lockwood, "but they had a tendency of getting drowned out". "First of all", he elaborates, "we had a slightly different line-up, a considerably weaker drummer and a far noisier, less able guitarist. It was very guitar-driven…but not in a good way".

"The old drummer used to put a blanket over his snare drum", interjects bassist, Jon Crannage. "I think it frightened him a bit", he speculates. After a momentary fit of amusement, Ian continues, "Well now we've hacked all of that out of our sound. It's more about melody and texture rather than what funny noises I can make".

"The death of the first chapter of the band's history", begins Jon in a slow, somewhat suspenseful tone, "was Ian being carjacked after rehearsal on Alfreton road". "At gunpoint" finishes Ian, to full dramatic effect. "So the rock stopped", returns Jon abruptly. "Needless to say, we're all packing pistols today" he quips with a touch of razor-sharp, black humour. "It was a defining moment in which things were coming to a head", offers Matt. "It was six to eight months before we got back together again," says Ian.

Following the demise of their first project, **Monaural**, in 2003, the band's original, densely shoegaze-inspired title inevitably lost all of its former significance. "At the time it fitted more with the aesthetic of what we were trying to do" Ian explains. "It was more of a deliberate foray into shoegaze". "We went from zeroes to heroes", remarks the immensely quotable Jon. "It was the ideal opportunity to change it", says Ian. "Until the rise of the far right in Switzerland, which is happening at the moment comes and scuppers us by making us all sound like Nazis", he laughs.

On the inspiration behind the forthcoming album, "Comfort In Fear", influences encompass everything from My Bloody Valentine to 80s hair metallers, Whitesnake.

"It's a real mix", Ian explains. "There are certain things that we all enjoy to an extent and we blend the bits that we like. Bits of classic rock…we all like bits of what used to get lumped in as shoegaze". "I never liked any of the shoegazing bands", Jon confesses. "I was listening to **Slowdive** earlier today and I thought they were more folky than anything". "They were really boring actually", Ian agrees. "We ended up getting lumped in with that kind of stuff because…" he deliberates for a moment, "we chose to. It was a useful way of getting into the record companies and getting a single out. If you want to get yourself noticed it helps to attach yourself to a particular scene. Of course, there's a downside to that. When you listen to our music, half of those songs would never get classed as shoegaze".

"Ultimately, what's led to the album and our sound is the fact that none of us like any of the music around at the moment…or at least none of the music that's in the NME" Ian states. "We see a lot of local bands, all with a very similar aesthetic, probably a bit younger than us. I doubt that they've listened to as wide a variety of music as we have and so they all attempt to sound the same…**The Libertines**, **Razorlight**, the **Arctic Monkeys**. And if all those bands are trying to do it now, then what's the point? All those bands have already been signed", he shrugs nonchalantly. "Our influence", he resumes with renewed expression, "is desperately trying not to sound like what other bands do at the moment".

Indeed, it becomes swiftly evident that Heroes of Switzerland are an unconventionally inventive act who possess the potential to defy the trend led by their bland, carbon copy contemporaries.

"Firstly, we're a very loud band", Ian says. "For a while we were stupid enough to play without earplugs, but that level of volume does transport you. The volume is part of the experience. Also, there's so much going on, so many layers, that you can actually forget about what's going on around you". Delving still deeper into psychological territory, he adds, "One of my main reasons for starting a band was as a means of escape. By and large, we don't have a lot of happy songs". Jon elaborates, "We went through a period where we had a lot of angst and hatred for the world…probably because we weren't getting laid at the time". "I'm gonna go hang myself now" Matt jokes, before slipping briefly off to the bar for the next round.

With particular reference to the upcoming release, "Comfort In Fear", Ian concludes, "Fear is what drives the escapism in the lyrics. I thought it was quite apt. If you experience it for a long time, then your normality becomes fear and you can seek comfort in that".

"I guess we're not a good time band", he laughs softly, "but we do have the songs to transport you…should you wish".

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