

26 DAYS AND STILL NO JUSTICE FOR PUSSY RIOT

“WE WEREN'T WILLING TO LET THIS BAND FALL APART”



FOLLOWING FIVE MONTHS IN THE STUDIO, **BIFFY CLYRO** HAVE FINALLY PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES TO **OPPOSITES: A DOUBLE-DISC ALBUM THAT'S THEIR MOST AMBITIOUS YET. AS KERRANG! WAS SHOCKED TO HEAR, IT'S ALSO THE RECORD THAT PULLED THE BAND FROM THE BRINK...**

Biffy clyro are in the mood for a party. And not just because they're busy wrapping up their sixth record the day that Kerrang! calls by their Los Angeles recording studio. It's also because said day is frontman Simon Neil's 33rd birthday. "I'm looking forward to getting absolutely mugged later," he laughs when K! has finished singing Happy Birthday at him. "That's one of my favourite phrases, 'mugged'. We've been very good recently because we've been tracking the songs and I've been looking after my voice by not drinking or smoking too much. But all that goes out the window tonight!"

The party is bringing the curtain down on an intense five-month stint in the studio for the Kilmarnock trio – broken only by fleeting hops to Europe for a handful of festival shows – that has yielded the 20-track, double-disc *Opposites*, due for release early next year.

The record sees the band push themselves, as

Simon says, "as far as we can". And it only took them nearly breaking up to achieve it...

FIRST UP, SIMON: WHY MAKE OPPOSITES A DOUBLE ALBUM?
 "It kind of happened accidentally, to be honest. We've always had the idea in the back of our minds to do a double album. We'd thought about it for the last album [2009's *Only Revolutions*] but, on this one, there were a few things that happened in our lives... For the first time ever, myself, Ben [Johnston, drums] and James [Johnston, bass] started to kind of drift apart."

IN WHAT WAY?
 "We were just looking for different things from life. We'd lost certain things in common. For the first time ever, it felt like we were falling apart. It was then that I started writing a bunch of songs that were all like, 'Fuck this, I can't handle it'. What we do is very rewarding, but we had to ask ourselves whether we were we happy or whether we should be, 'Fuck it, let's just call this a day'. A couple of weeks later, I just remember waking up one day and thinking, 'No, fuck that, these are the things I love and care for, and I'm not going to let my life fall apart without making a hell of an effort to make things better'. That was when the concept came up. I was writing from an 'us against the world' viewpoint again."

HOW DID THAT SHIFT IN YOUR SONGWRITING MID-ALBUM SHAPE THE FINAL THING?
 "Well, the first disc – *The Sand At The Core Of Our Bones* – moves in a really negative light. It's the sound of those days when you wake up and think 'Fuck everything, fuck everyone'. It's got that 'it's over' feeling. It's not nice. And the second disc – *The Land At The End Of Our Toes* – is the attempt to take control of life and destiny. It's about unity, being a team, conquering things together and trying to deal with life as a unit. Hopefully, by the end of the second disc, there's a reasonably upbeat feeling prevailing; a sense of resolution."

THE THEME SOUNDS ALMOST BIPOLAR...
 "Yeah, I guess it is. I'm not bipolar by any means, but I do almost have a split personality. When I do have

dark moments, everyone stays away from me. I think everyone has that side to them. I'm very much a pessimist and cynical about things, most of the time, even though I seem like a reasonably jolly fellow. When things don't go well, I do sometimes go to a really dark place. But those kind of moments inspire creativity. I'm not really a happy artist! When things are going too well, I don't have much to say!"

DIDN'T YOU FEEL THAT MAKING A DOUBLE ALBUM WOULD BE SOMEWHAT RISKY?
 "To some extent I do think it was a bit of a reaction against the throwaway nature of music at the moment. I wish people would invest in the music they love, so it becomes a companion to their life. We don't want to be that fleeting entertainer, 'that' fucking song. We want to be a friend to people. Everyone's lives are so similar in terms of the highs and lows you go through. Everyone's experiences may be different, but everyone gets their heart broken, everyone loses someone special to them, everyone has questions about where they're going, what they're doing, whether they can trust people or not... I think we try to express ourselves in that manner and that will stand the test of time."

HOW HAS ALL OF THAT TRANSLATED ONTO THE ALBUM?
 "We've certainly had to approach the songs differently. We've been attacking each song individually to try to give them all as much personality as possible. Because of that we feel like we've been able to push things as far as we can. I'm not gonna say the weirder parts are weirder, but we've been able to push the full spectrum of what we do; some songs are almost just keyboards and things, and some songs are full-on crazy rock. I don't think we could go any crazier than the mariachi bands, bagpipes and tap-dancers we have on this record!"

SO IS THIS BIFFY'S FINAL HURRAH AS WE KNOW THEM?
 "I like to think of it as the beginning of something new. I see us really stripping it back to just the three of us in a room again. It might end up being more acoustic-based or it might end up being really abrasive, but I just want to re-assess things. *Opposites* is as odd as it can be, it's as big as it can be, so the only way to go from here is to strip things down and start another phase of the band. It feels like that's how it should go. We definitely need to reset what we're trying to achieve on the next record because I genuinely don't think we can top this one."

OPPOSITES WILL BE RELEASED THROUGH 14TH FLOOR IN LATE JANUARY 2013

INSIDE OPPOSITES!

Simon Neil gives us a guided tour around both sides of the new record

THE SAND AT THE CORE OF OUR BONES

BIBLICAL
 Simon says: "It's generally about that time last year where I felt like everything was falling apart. It's about trying to give someone something and it's not helping; you're not going anywhere and you've reached a point where it's fucked. There are some lyrics about hanging from invisible cords. It's not literally about suicide, but that's the idea – partly about the band, partly about me and my wife; that idea of 'stay together or and it'."

THE THAW
 Simon says: "There's a theme of unity and trust on this one. There's a lyric, 'The secrets in the snow, will always come out in the thaw' and it's about people trying to hide who they are from you, for no apparent reason, and you're trying to scrape through to see the truth underneath it all. It's about how secrets, lies, fibs and pulling the wool over someone's eyes will never work."

LITTLE HOSPITALS
 Simon says: "It's one of the weirder songs on the album. We've got a verse on there that's just kazoo! At the start I'm singing, 'I'll turn your baby into lemonade' and it's a spin on that idea of when life gives you lemons you make lemonade. It's taking the piss out of that saying. It makes me sound like a right negative bastard!"

THE LAND AT THE END OF OUR TOES

SPANISH RADIO
 Simon says: "It's about trying to deal with my own faults and kind of say, 'Look, I love everyone around me, I think there's nothing more important than friendship and everyone being together'. The mariachi vibe here really suits the song. It's about feeling like you want to let things go but pleading with people to pull through it together."

VICTORY OVER THE SUN
 Simon says: "We played this during some of the summer shows. It's about that feeling where you can almost do anything if you stick together. There's a lyric, 'We can change the world, despite all our enemies / Fighting on if you listen to your heart and sing / Pray for love, it feels like a memory / But if we hold on, there's a victory over the sun'. It's about seeing the light through the darkness."

TRUMPET OR TAP
 Simon says: "It's got strings on it and the tap-dancer I mentioned. It's me saying what I'd do for the people around me. There's a lyric about me singing for three days straight, and it's about proving how I'll do absolutely anything to salvage personal relationships and save the band. No-one knows me better than Ben and James. No-one knows them as well as I do. We weren't willing to let that fall apart."

Biffy Clyro in Santa Monica, August 2012. The readers are this way, Simon...