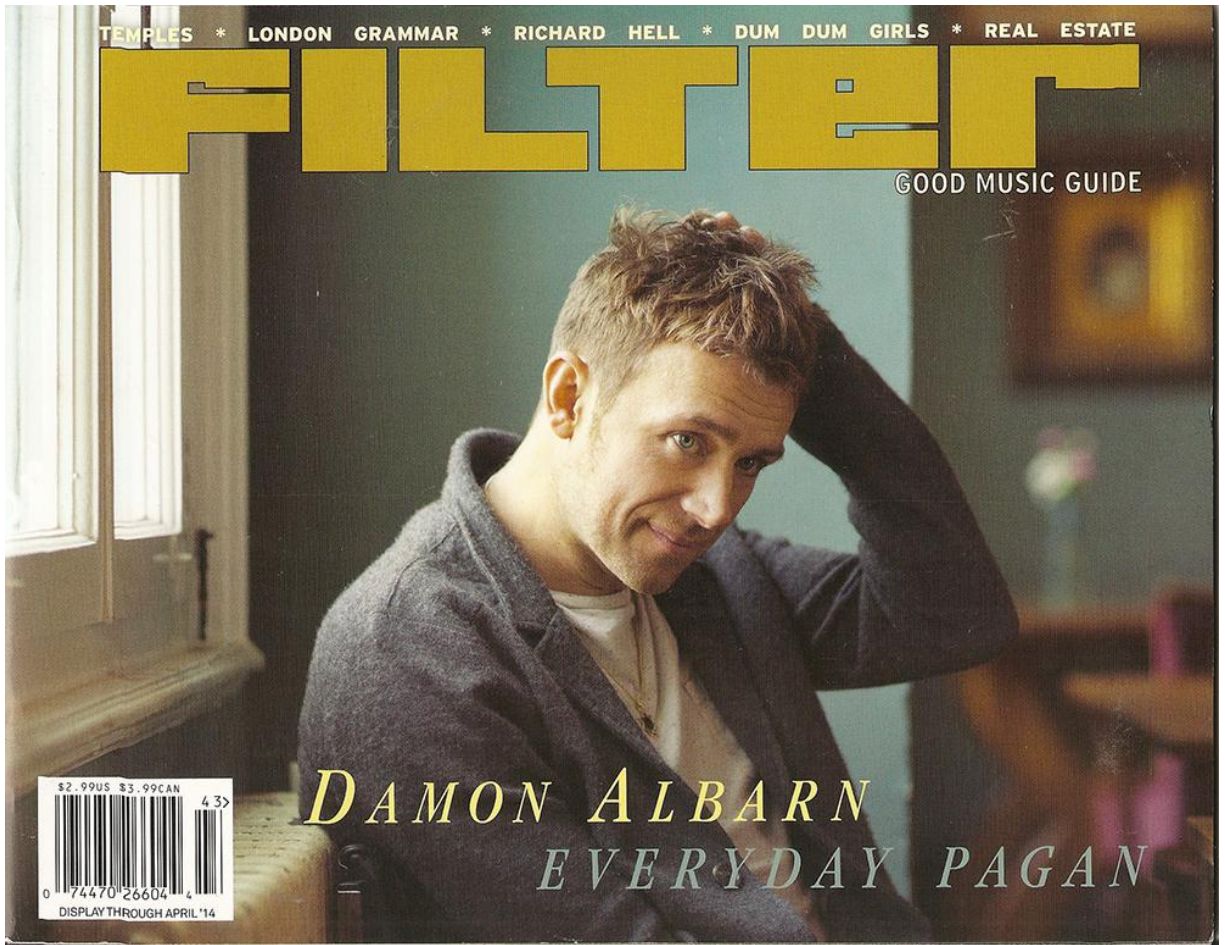


FILTER

GOOD MUSIC GUIDE



DAMON ALBARN

EVERYDAY PAGAN

The opening and title track features the line, "We are everyday robots on our phones/Looking like standing stones, out there on our own." You're clearly at conflict...

Well, we're very alone with our technology, aren't we? We think we're constantly in touch with each other, but it's a strange kind of contact. I'm guilty of even texting my daughter to tell her that dinner is ready.

There's a great sample in the same song, "They didn't know where they was going/But they knew where they was wasn't it." Is that biographical? Do you struggle to find that point you want or need to be on?

I think the subject matter of that song...it's raising the questions, "What are we doing to ourselves, and what are the implications? Are we aware?" Once you've got that in your head, then you can be very personal in your observations. That's where you get that tension between the optimism and the pessimism.

Speaking of tension, in "The Selfish Giant" you sing, "Press yourself to me right now," and it actually sounds a little frightened.

Yeah...it is.

Is there fear in this record?

There's anxiety. We're all, in some way or another, hiding; it's part of our nature, really. And it's why we gravitate towards any form of enlightenment. I suppose having nothing to hide would be the most beautiful state, wouldn't it?

That's an interesting observation. We're always trying to present an edited version of ourselves, it would seem.

But it's quite a gentle...well, that song has a striking line, "It's hard to be a lover when the TV's on/And there's nothing in your eyes." The actual inspiration was a night spent in this very small town in Scotland called Dumoon, where the American submarine fleet used to be harbored. I got there and everything was being decommissioned, still a wind down from the Cold War. It was a beautiful evening, with mist on the loch—and you could see the huge hull of this black submarine in the middle of the loch.

A vaguely disquieting image, I'm sure.

Yeah, and the song is about playing a gig there and having a

party, all while having that presence there—and how at any time it could just sort of sink under the water and disappear. It's sort of very domestic in its imagery in one way, and very apocalyptic in another.

It was almost inevitable that you would work with Brian Eno.

More inevitable than you would think! Because we are actually neighbors; we bump into each other. I used to go to the same health club as him... But I would do all the running machines and bikes, and he would be more interested in water aerobics and...talking. He's got a fantastic spirit about him, and he lives according to that spirit. I do love all those early records.

Clearly a lot of it showed up in Blur's music.

Yeah, really! He was a big influence on me. Unashamedly, I am a massive fan.

About Natasha Khan...the first time I saw her on a stage in New York, she and her girls had these painted faces and they were banging sticks on the floor. There was a kind of modernism about it, but there was also palpably a yearning to connect with something more primitive. I always felt that you operated artistically from a similar position of conflict.

You're absolutely right! You hit the nail right on the head.

I mean, you achieved this enormous success with a virtual band. Yet there's also this old-fashioned sentimentalism about you, a palpable fear of us disconnecting from our traditions.

Well, I'm probably, really, a pagan at heart.

What does that ultimately say about Damon Albarn?

Uh...it depends on what your definition of paganism is. For some it might mean talking to the moon; for some it might mean running around in a field talking to invisible spirits...

Like Julian Cope?

Yes! He's someone I have a lot of empathy with; some of his output has been deeply influential to me. But there are pagan aspects to all religions, really. I am fascinated by esoteric things, and I believe in magic.

