



CHECKING IN WITH AN ALT ICON

Damon Albarn's Next Act

The man behind Britpop heroes Blur and animated tricksters Gorillaz discusses his new solo disc *Everyday Robots*, reunions, and sweating with Brian Eno. —KYLE ANDERSON

You've had a lot of hits, but do you think people generally associate you with them?

In theory, there's an awful lot of people around the world who like my music—but they don't necessarily know, especially in the States, that it's me. I'm quite comfortable with that. When the first tune off *Everyday Robots* dropped, there was a lot online [like], "This guy really sounds like Gorillaz. He's ripping off Gorillaz!"

What made you decide to do a solo album?

I had been working with [producer] Richard Russell on *The Bravest Man in the Universe* for Bobby Womack, and we toyed with the idea of starting a new band. We even came up with a name, Pagan Jew, but we Googled it and found it was some kind of dodgy mail-order aphrodisiac spray. And we realized that two 45-year-olds trying to launch ourselves on the pop world might be...slightly undignified. Then Richard said, "What I'd like to do is produce you." So I went back to the neighborhood I grew up in in London, and it started to make sense. Obviously I tried to make it poetic, but apart from the last song with Brian

Eno, every single word and every line took place. It happened, no exaggeration.

How did Eno get involved?

I've known him for well over a decade, but that song came out of using the same health club—Brian typically was involved in more ambient stuff like unisex water aerobics, and I was doing more perfunctory running machines. [Laughs]

What is your creative process like?

I don't believe in there being mystique in things like this. I work 10 till 5:30, five days a week. It's unlikely you're gonna disappear up your own ass if you approach it like that. I should probably start seminars and run motivational weekends: "Just do the work!"

Would you reunite Blur or Gorillaz again?

Blur, we recorded, like, 15 songs in Hong Kong last year. I love hanging out with them, but I've always written all the material, so really, I'm still doing that. With Gorillaz, the cartoon is by Jamie Hewlett, but all the music is me. [So] the answer I should give is "I don't know, I'll have to go talk to myself about that. See if myself wants to do another Gorillaz record."



With Blur in the '90s