

The Trews

NO TIME FOR LATER

You can hear it in the first four bars of the album. A meaty, beaty, big and bouncy drum fill, followed by a glistening guitar line that could have been ripped from an old Rockpile album, and a breathy Hammond B3 so beautifully captured that it seems to conjure the dimensions of the room it sits in. It's huge, but intimate. Heavy, but airborne. And the hook is strong enough that you could hang a whale from it.

"In the end, we made sort of a two sided record," says Trews guitarist John Angus MacDonald, of the band's third album, *No Time for Later*. "It's some of the heaviest stuff we've done, but it's also some of the most out there artistically that we've ever laid down."

Too true. The Trews' reputation is built on buffed and visceral rock songs, but on *No Time for Later* they cohere like never before. The structures are more compelling, the playing is more articulate, and the results more nourishing. If it's the shrewd marriage of new and classic rock that accounts for the Trews' remarkable multi-generational appeal – meaning they're as welcome on *MuchMusic* as they are inside the pages of the UK's *Classic Rock* magazine – then *No Time for Later* finds the band expanding at both ends of the spectrum.

"Ocean's End" clads Jack Sypersek's willowy bassline in AC/DC's crunch, and then breaks down into phosphene psychedelia. In the

snakey single, “Hold Me in Your Arms”, the Trews use a buzzsaw to mediate between the re-tooled 21st Century radio rock of Velvet Revolver, and the righteous groove of off-road, resin-stained headbangers like Fu Manchu. Similarly, “Burning Wheels” is a Tom Petty riff given a nitro injection and mag wheels. And that unhinged solo about half way through? “That’s Colin’s only solo,” confides John Angus with a chuckle, referring to his brother, vocalist-guitarist Colin MacDonald. “He wanted to do a solo, so we said, ‘Okay, fine,’ and that’s what came out. It’s like Kurt Cobain or something. It’s just, like, unbridled fucking craziness. It’s totally animal.”

Continues John Angus, “But you need places to go. So much as you’d like to keep a somewhat consistent sound, if you want to keep making records that are at all interesting or fun to listen to, you gotta go places.”

So where did the Trews go? According to Colin, “We were always big fans of CCR and REM and stuff, and those influences had to come out sooner or later. At one point we wanted to take everything off the record that sounded remotely heavy. We wanted to make a total roots rock album.”

They didn’t of course – there’s no “unbridled fuckin’ craziness” on *Murmur* or *Willy and the Poor Boys* - but *No Time for Later* is elevated by a softer touch on tracks like the Fogerty-rooted “I Feel the Rain”, or the inspired “Will You Wash Away”, where melancholy meets uplift in a chorus that seems to enter the song sideways. If anything on the album points to their growth, it’s this song. Colin can’t say where it came from. Maybe he did what Neil Young claims to do, and channeled it.

“I can only hope,” he says. “I just don’t know, because I’ve spent a lot of time working my ass off on songs that ended up being shitty, and this one literally came out really, really quickly. Me and John Angus were sitting around listening to Cat Steven’s *Tea for the Tillerman*, and we started jamming on this tune, and it literally came in five minutes. Honestly, that’s the most unconscious song I’ve ever ever come up with. It literally just came out.”

Colin name checks Randy Newman as another abiding influence, which accounts for the sly sense of irony that pervades *No Time for Later*. “I Can’t Stop Laughing” addresses grief with a manic Celtic romp, propelled by Sean Dalton’s mighty tom workout; the furious “Gun Control” begins with a placid slide-guitar straight out of Ry Cooder’s *Paris, Texas* soundtrack; “Paranoid Freak” uses a skittery piano figure to capture the prevailing mood of our time, derived from all the hours the band has endured cooling its boots at US border crossings. And in the extraordinary “Man of Two Minds”, the Trews have produced a hymn to the worst corners of male psychology, dressed up in a romantic waltz-time melody worthy of Burt Bacharach.

“A scumbag song,” claims Colin.

“I thought it was hilarious,” adds John Angus. “It’s so blatant, (but) it’s honest. That’s the key.”

In total, *No Time for Later* represents a major graduation for the band, right down to the Ralph Steadman-by-way-of-Warhol cover art designed by Syperek. Incredibly, it was the counter-intuitive approach of producers Gus Van Go and Werner F that the Trews credit for the breakthrough. The first thing the team did was take one of the best live rock acts on the planet, break it down to its constituent parts, and – starting with drummer Dalton -record each member separately in a painstaking exercise that Colin only half-jokingly describes as “our *Rumours*.”

Syperek admits to being out of his comfort zone. “To tell you the truth, I wanted everybody in my headphones while I was playing,” he says. “I thought I would get more feeling. But as we got into it, it allowed me to listen to my parts and make them better, and go back, and improve things.” The bassist is one of the best *feel* musicians out there, but he’s convinced by the results. “This is the next step,” he concludes.

Colin adds, “We wanted to go with younger guys who had a bit more to prove. And they were as hungry as we are. Guys who were willing to stay up for twenty-four hours to make sure a certain song didn’t come off cheesy.”

“I don’t think we’ve ever been worked so hard by producers,” continues John Angus, who was looking for “a general vibe that we haven’t quite nailed in the studio yet. It was kind of like the first time we worked with Gordie (Johnson), where everything was new and a challenge. The only difference is back then we kinda sucked.”

His modesty aside, John Angus can rest assured that their efforts have yielded the most fully formed work of the band’s already impressive career. All that remains is the listening. And this bio, of course; custom-designed to make you hear the record.

“Bios are usually so embarrassingly flattering of the band,” snorts John Angus. “*This band fucking GETS RAWK!* Then you listen to it, and you’re like, *wha...?*”

Readers should be advised that in this case, the praise couldn’t be any more sincere.

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