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BRONCO BULLFROG

· THE SIDELONG GLANCES OF A PIGEON KICKER ·

Barnaby Slade · Octopus · Tea And Sympathy · Look At Me · Stig's Not Dead · Sunday
Wally's Dream · Witch's Garbage · I'm Not Getting Through · Last Chance To Smile · Honeybus



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THE SIDELONG GLANCES OF A PIGEON KICKER

LOUIS: *The Sidelong Glances Of A Pigeon Kicker* was a hardback novel I picked up, probably in a charity shop in Leicester, or possibly in that dusty bookshop on the lower tier of the Silver Arcade. I liked the cartoon cover, was very mid-60s and appealed to my aesthetic values at that time. It was shortly after discovering David Boyer's 1968 novel that Andy and I chanced upon a film version from 1970 (simply titled *Pigeons*), and the seed was sown. I believe it was Andy, with a penchant for long album titles, who came up with the idea of using the title for the next album.

It was a new millennium, and to three extremely naive and impressionable twenty-somethings, London was still swinging and we were enthusiastically drinking from its paisley chalice. We worked in offices or on industrial estates, we went to the pub before going home, food money was now record money, and we made smoking a national sport. Since all three members of the band were now living in North London, we were in the strong position of being spoilt for choice of where to record the next album and it appeared most of the people and bands in our circle had at one time or another utilised Toe Rag Studios' services. The fact it was a simple bus ride from our base in Manor House made it a strong contender and the plan I recall, was to record a couple of tracks and then see how we got on with the space.

Admittedly, the vintage amps, recording equipment and general "old school" approach lent itself to our belief (probably a desire) that we sounded like some obscure noisy pop band who'd recorded one 45 for Immediate, and then one for Deram, and then a final one for Hit-Ton Schallplatten, all within three months in late 1966. So, over a period of eight months or so, we recorded and mixed under the watchful eyes (and ears) of Liam Watson, a weekend here, a weekend there, recording, mixing, tinkering with the sounds, in what was generally a relaxed atmosphere.

And then we got burgled. Every bass guitar I owned, even a couple of Mike's guitars, plus about £11.28 in tuppences (it probably weighed more than that mahogany Dan Armstrong bass) were gone with one fell swoop of a garden spade; which left the front door to the flat in two horrifically splintered sections. I was shaking, the cat was freaking out, and in that singular moment the whole

world had collapsed in on itself.

We soldiered on, borrowed guitars, and completed the album. It's got my favourite bass sound of all our albums and, looking at the remaining photos of us sitting around pianos, swapping guitars, swapping roles (and probably even t-shirts), reminds me of a time when the Broncos ethos was one of "we can do this", and we definitely got things done. It was a good team, a good little band, and this is a bloody good album.

ANDY: This album is the one I associate with Bronco Bullfrog becoming "a proper band". That said, it's my least favourite.

We'd been playing in Spain for a year or so by the time we started recording at Toe Rag and were definitely improving as a live band. To have a Spanish label (Mushroom Pillow) approach us and offer us money to make an album felt mad at the time - we'd paid for everything from the band kitty up 'til then. To their enormous credit, they let us get on with it, never interfering or asking to hear demos or works-in-progress.

I remember feeling like I'd lost my way as a songwriter at this point. My contributions sound like they're all modelled on other things (even though we'd always brazenly cribbed the odd middle eight or chord sequence from the music of our heroes) and, possibly in an effort to lighten the load (share the blame!), I encouraged Louis and Mike to write more songs. I'm not entirely sure that worked - the material feels weaker and less honest here. Less us. And the sequencing makes no sense.

Still, we managed to play six or seven songs from it on stage, which was more than we'd done with the second album, and "Octopus" (which Mike and I had written in the pre-Bronco days) and "Barnaby Slade" and "Witch's Garbage" (the two songs of which I'm proudest here) became staples of our live shows until the end. Louis' song "Sunday" is probably my favourite on the record and was certainly the hardest to play: it's like him condensed into five and a half minutes of music.

Recording with Liam was a hoot. We were always trying something new, something to subvert or improve the

basic tracks: playing the piano strings with plectrums, slowing backing tracks down and putting a mandolin solo on top, tracking multiple instrumental and vocal overdubs live, and actual *bona fide* tape phasing. Listen to it go!

I dug out some photos while we were putting this reissue together and the memories came flooding back. Mike and I trading ideas on piano and acoustic guitar, Louis conjuring complex lead guitar parts out of the Toe Rag walls, smoking endless fags, tea and biscuits (Lemon Thins!), borrowed guitars, Louis' vest... Good times.

MIKE: Our days spent in Leicester had come to an end and within months we all found ourselves living in the same neighbourhood in North London. Things were set to dust off the cobwebs and get the band back into action.

We had amassed a bunch of songs and decided to visit Toe Rag Studios to lay them down. Over the course of the next few months and under the watchful ears of studio magician Liam Watson we began to record what would become our third album. Looking back, I seem to remember some of the sessions overlapped with The White Stripes who were in town recording their much-acclaimed *Elephant* album.

So, in between our day jobs and regular gigs in London and Spain we began to get to work, with a few of the new tracks becoming staples of our live repertoire at the time.

Listening to it now, almost 20 years later, I'm very happy with the songs and sounds we managed to create and look back fondly on the fun and games, endless cups of tea and many packets of Lemon Thin biscuits we consumed whilst recording.

Whilst managing to overcome relationship breakdowns, flat break-ins with loss of guitars and negotiating a brand-new life in a big, unfamiliar city, I reckon we did quite well.

Thank you to Mushroom Pillow for the original release and Guerssen for this lovely new reissue.

Mike, Louis and Andy during the album sessions at Toe Rag Studio



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SIDE ONE

1. **Barnaby Slade** (A. Morten)
2. **Octopus** (A. Morten/M. Poulson)
3. **Tea And Sympathy** (M. Poulson)
4. **Look At Me** (A. Morten)
5. **Stig's Not Dead** (A. Morten)
6. **Sunday** (L. Wiggett)

SIDE TWO

1. **Wally's Dream** (L. Wiggett)
2. **Witch's Garbage** (A. Morten)
3. **I'm Not Getting Through** (A. Morten)
4. **Last Chance To Smile** (M. Poulson/A. Morten)
5. **Honeybus** (A. Morten)

Bronco Bullfrog is:

Michael Poulson - Lead vocals, electric and acoustic guitars, piano, percussion.

Louis Wiggett - Vocals, bass guitar, electric guitar, mandolin.

Andy Morten - Lead vocals, electric and acoustic guitars, drums, percussion.

Recorded by Liam Watson at Toe Rag Studio, London between March 2001 and January 2002.

Sleeve design by Fausto Pérez.

Love and thanks to Adán and Luis (Folipop), Aitor, Alex, Alex and Elena (León), Álvaro, Andy Cat, The Askena, Aznive, Carlos, Edgar, Eduardo, Fausto, Fernando, Giffie, Paki, Javi, Jorge (La Rioja), Karen, The Kubli, Liam, Luis (Bilbao), Marcos and Patricia, María, Mark (Twist), Michelle, Mojo, Paloma, Sara, The Vatican.

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