

HOT CHIP

One Life Stand

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Warmer, deeper and more stripped back than their previous record *Made In the Dark- One Life Stand* is still conscientiously crafted and informed by the kind of intelligent evaluation that is now second nature to **Hot Chip**. The seductive and surprisingly glossy finish they can deliver when the mood takes them **is enhanced by** an emotional honesty and open-hearted optimism that is disarmingly affecting. With both feet in the Jack Track underground roots of classic house and techno, and a heart in candid song-writerly craft, the album is convincingly inspired by Joe Smooth, Marshall Jefferson, Derrick May, Theo Parrish, Bill Withers and Bill Callahan all at once. *One Life Stand* seeps through to your soul while defiantly striking a pose in the middle of the dance floor called Now!

“We never have any plan when we record”, says **Joe Goddard**, one half, along with **Alexis Taylor**, of a core duo that have had the name Hot Chip since they played Pavement and Spacemen 3 covers at Elliott School, Putney where they first met in their early teens. “Things happen and we try to follow the thread wherever it leads. People might be surprised by a song like “**I Feel Better**” coming from us. It’s kind of a big, commercial song that came from nowhere. We decided to embrace that instead of discarding it on this album. ”

But even this accidental towering Euro classic just waiting for a Robyn or a David Guetta to add shimmering synths and perform it on some glittering music awards show from Dubai- isn’t enough to drag the whole thing in one direction. There’s still one of those gorgeous ballads that make you feel like you’re looking through a gap in Alexis’ curtains as he emotes almost privately on the ironically titled “**Slush**” (a recent collaboration with Robert Wyatt was inspired and makes perfect sense when you hear this). Songs from Joe like “Brothers” and the beautifully naive “Alley Cats” seem to move closer to Alexis’ instinctively candid style. Gospel-inspired arms-aloft future house classics like “**Hand Me Down Your Love**” arm-wrestle with the spooky bass-line heavy Detroit influenced disturbance that is “**Take It In**”- something which might have Jeff Mills wondering why he’d never thought of putting something whistle-able on top of his brooding psychosis.

One Life Stand is brimming with the easy eclecticism we have come to expect- absorb if you will, the idea of avant icon Charles Hayward of This Heat making like Marshall Jefferson’s 909 machines on real drums. Still, uniquely, Hot Chip remain upliftingly accessible.

“I’m always naturally drawn to simple, honest, big productions- things like “Love Can’t Turn Around”. Even if I’m lost in underground stuff, I’m always drawn to music with hooks in it. This record is the best and clearest expression of that kind of idea for us so far,” says Joe.

Alexis concurs: “Instead of being something to shy away from it should have that honesty, always. That’s what I want from other people’s music too”

When they speak you quickly realize these are two people who would have become friends whether their tastes in music saw them working together or not. “We bonded at a very early age. We’ve known each other for 18 years”, remembers Joe. “We met in first year at school. We were in different form groups but I became friendly with his group of friends and we’d eat our packed lunch out on the stairs. We used to spend our Friday evenings at 15 or 16 playing acoustic guitars

and hanging out. He would write songs on his guitar and I would help him record things round my house on computer. We were always very serious about it. Alexis is more obsessed with music than almost anyone else I know and I am pretty bad too. Even back then we were trying to record things properly.”

“He had a 4 track. He was the only person I knew that did. And he was always up for recording stuff. We had the name Hot Chip set in stone even then. We did a gig together when we were 16 at lunchtime or something- covers of “Range Life” by Pavement and “Walking With Jesus” by Spacemen 3 and our own songs too on organ and electric guitar. It was quite lo-fi but not acoustic. We both listened to The Beatles, The Kinks and I loved Prince and Stevie Wonder, Tim Buckley too. We went to separate Universities but we still carried on, stayed in touch, getting into new things like the Rodney Jerkins productions and trying to make things inspired by Aphex Twin and Destiny’s Child in our own little way...” Alexis drifts in a kind of reverie. You realize music for him is a desperate passion. That he almost lives through what he loves (does?)

Joe is not far behind though according to his school friend. “He’ll be straight off the tour bus wherever we go. Right into a record shop and gone for maybe 4 to 6 hours. Sometimes I join him, standing behind him at the deck waiting to listen to things while he’s trawling through a vast pile, totally oblivious. Maybe he takes no notice because it’s just me.”

Asked how he relaxes, Joe says he just likes to work. He recently recorded Kano and Little Boots and is sought after for his empathetic skills. “When I’m not working I buy records. I love the calmness in a dusty old record shop. I buy music to DJ with but to learn from too. That’s how I unwind.”

But this obsessiveness about music from all genres and all eras is not just about the anal retentiveness of the collector. All of this free time research is clearly feeding into the records they write and record together.

Joe uses them at his own Greco Roman nights while the clearly scholarly Alexis mentions his love of the directness of author Raymond Carver and 20th century Greek poet CP Cavafy before getting right back to what makes him tick.

“I guess if you could say this record had any starting point it was listening to Derrick May’s “Strings Of Life” the original mix of that. It’s inspiringly primitive sounding and quite rough - with wild panning from left to right. Those production values together with Bill Withers’ “Harlem” and one by Swamp Dog called “God Bless America For What” really hit home. They seem now to make some sense of what we have done. Then there are the steel pans, played by Fimber Bravo (formerly of Steel n’ Skin). I loved records like Van Dyke Parks’ “Discover America”, which evokes a beautiful atmosphere using that instrument. They were intended to be all over the album but we restrained ourselves a bit!”

Similarly, Joe’s intentions were quite clear. “I got really annoyed with aggressive processed digital dance music. I wanted to think about the antidote to that, to bring back some of the original spirit of dance music. I was thinking about records like “Stand On The Word” by The Joubert Singers. It’s a gospel record really, but played in New York clubs in the 80s. These records mean what they say and it’s the same with Alexis and what he writes. It’s important for things to feel human. Some things are so airbrushed and slick and perfect.... we quite like to try to do something more human than that. I like things that have something not right about them, I suppose.”

This could also explain how the location for much of the recording of *One Life Stand* was chosen. In the heart of a disused industrial building in London, Lanark Studio, run by Hot Chip’s **Felix Martin** and **Al Doyle**, was reduced to a blackened hole following an accident in 2008. The studio was rebuilt and refitted with all analogue equipment just in time for the sessions to begin in Spring 2009, and the defiantly eccentric atmosphere was important to shaping the sound of the new record.

The three other members of the band each bring their own unique skills to the Hot Chip dynamic, which have been fused over the years through relentless touring and live performance.

Owen Clarke, a school friend of Joe and Alexis, is a quick-witted instrumentalist with a stubbornly experimental streak only matched by his ear for a catchy guitar hook. His artistic visions have also been the catalyst for most the band's artwork from the first album onwards.

Al Doyle, a highly talented guitarist long coveted by LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy, can play virtually any instrument, and on *One Life Stand* this includes bass, cello, synthesizer and the flugelhorn, which he learnt so that it could be played on just one of the new songs.

Fellow producer Felix Martin completes the formidable 10 armed-beast that we know as Hot Chip with a passion for house and techno music that has also seen Al and Felix embark on their own studio projects including original material as well as remixes and production for other artists (including Kraftwerk and planningtorock) and DJ'ing around the world.

Of the three Joe says, "They are crucial to us in terms of the aesthetic and the feeling. Talking to you about how Alexis and me work is necessary, but Hot Chip is very much a band and they are a vital part of it. What we do live together is a whole other thing that has a life of its own too. Things evolve as we try them out live.

"Often we don't play the same parts on the same instruments when we go back to playing live", says Alexis. To be honest it's not that important to us. It's better that the songs speak for themselves, regardless of arrangements. I find it boring to go and hear people replicate a record note for note. I can't really see the point of that".

Such is the commitment to a kind of theoretical drift in their method, there is quite a good chance that the songs from *One Life Stand* may well end up rendered on the spoons when Hot Chip get to playing them live soon. However they choose to frame them, they stand tall alongside those beloved 'proper songs' - the many inspirations Joe and Alexis amass on a seemingly daily basis.

For more info please contact:

Alison Tarnofsky-212.786.8278 or alison.tarnofsky@emimusic.com

