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For Immediate Release:



LIAM GOWING EXPLAINS MEANING OF “DRUNK SLUTS FOREVER” IN THE WAKE OF U.S. RADIO STATIONS REFUSING TO PLAY ALBUM

Writing “Drunk Sluts Forever” was a pretty heavy experience. I started the project right after the triple whammy of being laid off from the *Los Angeles Times*, my father’s death and my being diagnosed with a potentially metastatic form of skin cancer. The apparent cause of this last was my playing drums until my fingers blistered badly enough to incite Squamous-cell carcinoma growth in the scab. But I suspect a more personally disturbing reason: I’d borrowed those blistering drumsticks from a cancer-riddled drummer who, only two weeks away from expiring, was living a lifelong dream of playing with his heroes at Rock ‘n’ Roll Fantasy Camp. And I’d sat at a kit beside him for five days straight, while on an emotionally demanding assignment for the *Times*, straining to match his every movement until our beats were psychically tight. It’s my suspicion that I had become such an “empath” for other people’s suffering (or more to the point, such a desiccant for death) that I somehow “caught” or otherwise psychosomatically manifested my cancer... How else can one explain getting cancer from a *blister*?

The inspirations for many of the album tracks were equally disconcerting: Being alone with my father at the moment of his death (“Release”); contextualizing my mother’s horrible passing from pancreatic cancer (“So Long (Pine Box)”); the suicide of my roommate and close friend and the discovery of his body decomposing in the bedroom (“The Suicide Machine”); the near complete self-destruction of another live-in friend via a mixture of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and—worst of all—pharmaceutical drugs (“The Perfect Parasite”); a sweetheart’s being forced into rehab after an overdose (“Party Down”); and the suggestion that someone I’d once called a friend was, in essence, a rapist (“Pinocchio Nose”). I injected a heavy dose of metaphor and black humor into the lyrics but the songs are pretty dark. The experience of recording them, however, was incredibly cathartic and lead me down a path to a more insouciant perspective.

The penultimate track I worked on was by far the toughest to nail down. It began with one of my grandest and most precious melodies. I tried at least two complete sets of heavy, important-sounding lyrics on it and neither seemed to work. Frustrated one day, while doing that most mundane task, laundry, I started to string together a descriptive list of my favorite t-shirts, concluding with the silliest one of the lot. It’s a baby blue t-shirt, which a smart, funny and empowered female friend of mine, Jennifer Brandon Elliott, designed and sold to me for one dollar (hence the line “it was worth the price”), with the words “Drunk Sluts Forever” on the front. After all the doom and gloom, it felt great to write about something so frivolous as a comfortable shirt and the very nature of the subject matter freed me up to try something equally loose with the music. After tons of fun experimentation, it ended up a triptych—a suite with three sections: All the same

chord progression arranged three drastically different ways... four if you count the elevator sequence linking Parts 2 and 3.

Having embraced the t-shirt concept for Part 1, I got a little deeper on Part 3. Looking at the tag on my “Drunk Sluts Forever” t-shirt—an American Apparel “Standard American” in Large—I began ruminating on how much of the world views the “standard” large American... You know, the stereotype of the undereducated, overfed loudmouth who arrives on foreign shores, drunk on his own hubris, ready to impose his language, his market philosophy and his allegedly debauched Western ways (and, more generously, his money) on the locals. Thinking of the “standard” American as the ultimate drunk slut, I adopted him as a character and wrote the lyrics to Part 3 *in his defense*.

The track became such a gargantuan, gorgeous, hilarious odyssey that when it came time to title the album, I couldn't *not* name it “Drunk Sluts Forever.” So for the record, I named the album after the spirit of licentious experimentation captured in a song, which was inspired by a daring female who designed a t-shirt with a naughty slogan I used as a metaphor for America—for all of us in the decadent West. If there's any exhortative philosophy behind it, it's simply to laugh at one's misfortunes, to embrace absurdities and to try to keep things loosey-goosey.

I didn't intend a literal connection to inebriation or promiscuity and the idea that it might be viewed as misogynistic—as if men can't be sluts—is anathema to me. Obviously, I knew the title could be misinterpreted if taken at face value. I figured that as soon as one listened to the record, one would understand it was no “Girls Gone Wild” soundtrack and at the very least assume that the name was being employed ironically or facetiously.

But having heard from Rich Michalowski at Total Recluse radio promotion that several DJs have refused to play not just the title track but *any* track off the album—effectively banning me from their corner of the airwaves—simply because of the album's name is upsetting. Are we living in such Victorian times that a word like “slut” should incite across-the-board, *a priori* censorship? Is there anyone on the planet besides Rush Limbaugh who uses the word “slut” seriously as a pejorative for sexually free women?

If that's the case, I apologize for the confusion. Either way, I would like to say to the DJs who have refused to play my music based on this misunderstanding, don't judge a book by its cover! If nothing else, I think it's a disservice to your listeners who might enjoy “Drunk Sluts Forever,” which I believe—false humility aside—is a really interesting record.

Sincerely,
Liam Gowing