

Architects

'the classic symptoms of a broken spirit' biography

Many bands might not be so keen to rip it up and start again, especially when they're on to a good thing. Finding yourself with a Number One album and selling out arenas is enough for some to repeat a winning formula. Architects however, are that shark that dies if it stops swimming. "It was definitely validating and felt really cool for like a day," recalls drummer, producer and songwriter Dan Searle of hitting the top spot with 'For Those That Wish To Exist'. "For a lot of the bucket list things you reach in any career, there's a momentary gratification then you're like, 'What next?' You just move on. By the time the album came out, my head was already in the mindset of 'Broken Spirit'. That was where I was at."

Searle notes how it was their albums 'Lost Forever/Lost Together', 'All Our Gods Have Abandoned Us', and 'Holy Hell' that really "cemented what the band was about" and "took them to a new level" as a rock powerhouse and leaders of the UK's metalcore scene – making it all the more "daunting" to reinvent themselves on the records that would follow. "Especially after we re-recorded 'Wish To Exist' at Abbey Road with an orchestra, I felt that we had to shelve the strings and all that stuff," he says. "I wanted to make this album with a different aesthetic. We were enjoying working with the synths and doing stuff that we hadn't done before."

As a band who never stop writing, the kernels of the songs that make up 'The Classic Symptoms Of A Broken Spirit' were already in progress before the ink had time to dry on the artwork of their last record. Architects were on a creative roll, and the record was born of that creative freedom. Produced by Dan Searle and Josh Middleton, with additional production from Sam Carter at Decon's Middle Farm Studios and their own Brighton Electric Studios before being mixed by Zakk Cervini, the band were buoyed by finally being back in a room together after their last album was made mostly remotely due to COVID restrictions. The result was something altogether more "free, playful and spontaneous," Searle explains.

"This one was made a little bit more tongue-in-cheek," he says. "There are definitely parts that we did as a joke! There was more writing on the spot, being a bit giddy and not second-guessing it. That's not to say that there aren't songs on this album that weren't overly slaved over, but this one has the most songs that were written in the moment. This album takes itself a little bit less seriously than our others, despite the name!"

Carter agrees: "This one feels more live, more exciting and more fun – it has that energy. We wanted it to be a lot more industrial and electronic. That was the main mission. They can sit side-by-side: Mr Electronic and Mr Organic."

You can really hear that sense of abandon on the devious earworm of 'Spit The Bone', sing-along pit instigator 'When We Were Young' and the unpredictable, unhinged heavy beast 'Be Very Afraid'. Lyrically, the album also sees Searle turn darker subjects on their head. "I joke about the end of the world and stuff," he laughs. "I really battle with the idea of going on too much about negative things. For me, it's really hard to vere away from those topics. I have a wife and two kids that I love and a job that I love. On a personal, superficial level, I'm in a super privileged position – but that's not to say that I haven't escaped my childhood with no scars or neurotic behaviours. I still have a mind that has a dark side to it. I still worry about the future. Our albums are an opportunity for me to deal with that. It's my way of therapising myself through the negative things in my life."

Darting between "what's happening to the planet" and Searle's own "self destructive ways, inability to understand myself, the trauma that I make and live through" – often in the same song – the album is an often absurd questioning of "how much our collective trauma from hundreds of thousands of years of death, loss and destruction impacts our behaviour, our selfishness and our inability to look two feet beyond our own nose".

That sideways glance at the end of days shines best on 'Spit The Bone' ("*Everyone knows one halo beneath the payload, we had it all but now we're all cannibals*"), 'Living Is Killing Us' ("*We fell in love*

with the death machine, too much will never be enough”), ‘Doomscrolling’ (*“No betting on tomorrow, but we all love a tragedy, come drown in our sorrows and see the world as it ought to be – delete another day”*), and ‘Be Very Afraid’ (*“They all say revelation’s on its way”*). “It’s about living in that constant state of fear and anxiety, and how paralysing that can be for all of us,” says Searle.

For Carter however, the most revealing track is the album’s simmering centre-piece ‘Burn Down My House’. Taking in the band’s post-rock influences, it builds a cinematic moodscape as the frontman warns: *“I swear I’m OK, just hear the words I don’t say”*.

“A lot of us have struggled with mental health,” he says. “I had been on antidepressants for a long time. The year we started making the record, I had just come off them. I know that Dan and I are both still in counseling and therapy. That song is so important because it epitomizes how you can feel when you’re just completely shot and fed up. There are a lot of times where I didn’t know that I was in that spiral or struggling. It’s a song that asks, ‘Do you have that friend that you’re concerned about?’”

He goes on: “You need to have those discussions and make people understand. The hardest thing I ever did when looking after my mental health was that first conversation. Male suicide is the biggest killer of men, and it’s fucking insane. If we get through to one person in a crowd and they make a phone call, then it’s worth it.”

It’s a discussion that Carter has made the effort to have on stage, especially through his own darkness following the passing of guitarist and principal songwriter Tom Searle – a founding member and Dan’s brother – who died of cancer in 2016. Since then, the loss of their close friend has coloured much of their work. Now, they can exorcise their demons and reach out to their fans in a different light on ‘The Classic Symptoms Of A Broken Spirit’. “This one is more of a party,” concludes Carter. “We’ve got a good atmosphere and we’re celebrating Tom rather than being too downbeat. He’ll always be there as part of the band, but this one is more exciting. One of my friends recently told me after a show, ‘You weren’t quite there yet, but now you’re having fun and in the moment’. You never forget what happened, but you learn from it.”

As Architects march on with a dance in their step, they’re already giving some serious thought to their 11th album. Searle won’t give too much away – apart from his excitement. “I’m astonished that we’ve done album 10, the band is bigger than ever and there’s no fatigue or jadedness about us,” he said. “I feel more inspired than ever to write and I habitually want to move forward. I’m too cynical to make big, grand statements at this stage of my life about this album changing the world or us being the best band in the world. That might stand against us, but I don’t think it’s as damaging as my refusal to download TikTok. Maybe that will be our downfall. I just want to keep creating.”

Carter also recognises the band’s impact on the scene, but again is in no mood for standing still. “I’d be lying if I said I didn’t notice bands trying to pinch the odd riff here and there and trying to get away with it,” he laughs. “You have to take that as a compliment. We’ve always tried to be one record ahead of the rest. It keeps you on your toes to at least try and be the innovators. If you think you’re the best, then you’re not striving to be it.”

Comparing the band to a Premier League footballer who needs to go back into training after each season’s victory, Carter is confident that their Cantona years of looking back on their glory days are a long way off for now, as they’re still living through them – but now with a mind to let the good times roll. Nothing can go wrong if you’re doing what feels right. As Carter growls on the industrial stomp of the arena-ready album gem ‘Tear Gas’: *“Anything is possible – wake up the unstoppable”*.