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## eGigs talks Therapy?

with bassist Michael McKeegan on Monday 10 December 2012

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eGigs talks to **Therapy?** bassist **Michael McKeegan** ahead of their headline Sheffield show.

#### How's the tour going?

It's great, we're about seven weeks into it, we've got seven more shows to go. Yep it's been fantastic, we've been round Europe for six weeks and that was really good 'cos we tour Europe a lot but this time we went to Scandinavia and other places so it was good to get back out there and see some familiar faces.

#### How has the crowd's response to 'A Brief Crack Of Light'?

It's been great you know, 'cos sometimes in the past we would have maybe toured an album before it's been released and this is before the albums could have been leaked on the internet. I always thought it was a weird concept, because a lot of people would hear the set and be like "don't know that one, or that one..." and it's good to play the new stuff out, so this time it's been good that the album came out last February; we did a short tour and a few festivals and I think that a lot of people have been able to live with the album, rather than listen to it twice and go to the gig where it goes over their head. We've been playing six or seven songs off it live and it's gone down really, really well. It's interesting how it varies in different countries as well. It's been so far really good in the UK, touch wood.

#### 'A Brief Crack Of Light' was recorded over two sessions in Newcastle at Blast Studios, any reason for that?

On the first session I think we recorded maybe twelve songs, and then when we got them mixed and listened to them there were a few of the songs that we thought didn't work as well in the context of the album. They were good songs in their own right but sometimes you end up with two songs that are too similar tempo wise of there's just something that doesn't make them stand out and we wanted every song on the album to have its own unique bit of character, and a few weren't as unique as the other ones so to speak so we went back in and recorded another four tracks, which is great because we used three of those on the album. It was well worth doing, I'm really glad we did it. With this being our thirteenth album and us being around as long as we're very, very particular, we don't wanna just bung something out, and you have to go on tour and play it and live with it.

#### After 'Infernal Love' you were nearly labelled by American PR as "European Metallica meets Depeche Mode". Have you had any other strange descriptions?

Erm... not really. Sometimes people come up and they have really weird reference points, a lot of people lump us in with a lot of pop punk bands, which is a genre I'm not really into at all... I can kinda see where they're coming from with a few songs maybe but if you look at the overall thing I don't think we have a lot in common with NOFX or bands like that, which is an interesting one. I see us more, like Depeche Mode or Metallica or Killing Joke or a band like that that's got their own little identity. Someone once said we sounded like Hawkwind when we first started... I thought that was an odd one but having got into Hawkwind after that I can kinda see certain songs have that repetitiveness and that trancy type thing.

#### How is the rock music scene in Northern Ireland right now?

It's great; the music scene in general is really good. A few years back a lot of bands were trying to copy other things. We've got La Faro touring with us, and they've got their own thing going on, and then you have The Answer, more classic rock and blues rock... everyone's got their own axis of a noisy three piece... it's not all the same thing which is good.

#### What inspirations are behind this album?

I can't really speak on Andy's behalf, but (for me it's) absurdity. It's quite a lot of things... some electronic music, but obviously wanting to play with those sorts of sounds and make it rock on guitars. Bits of black metal... quite a mish mash of stuff... the initial sparks come from curveballs. I know a lot of bands that will go out and listen to the Top 10 for an idea as that's what's popular, but I think a lot of the things we draw on are films and soundtracks, things people say and people's behaviour and stuff like that.

#### You toured this year on the Jagermeister tour with Skindred, how did that come about?

They just asked us to do it. We did a Halloween show with them last year, and they just asked us to do it. They said we're putting together a four band bill, low ticket price, you guys and Skindred and two other bands and it was brilliant. In this day and age it's nice to be able to do a package like that... obviously none of us could afford to do it at that level

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package like that... obviously none of us could afford to do it at that level without Jagermeister's involvement, you know, so there is that element of sponsorship, but then, I like Jagermeister so I'd be a hypocrite. Most festivals you go to it's all branded with all the beer and mobile phone companies... I've got an iPhone, what can you do? I've had conversations with people who say it's a sell out thing to do but I say people can see four great bands for five quid and people are downloading music off the internet so bands aren't making any money. You're wearing Levis and you're giving me this punk holier than thou speech... You can't avoid it in this day and age and I think for bands especially because of how record sales are going. It really is a no brainer.

**How did playing 'Troublegum' in full go down at Sonisphere a couple of years ago?**

It was good... there was a massive, massive fuck up at the beginning... we were on about eleven, so Rammstein had just finished and the tent was absolutely rammed, with a couple of thousand people out. Thirty seconds in the PA just cut off. We walked off like "right..." the crowd were not very happy; bit confused. We went back on, ran the intro again, it cut out again. So that's two false starts. We didn't know what was happening... the generator had failed I think. The third start went ok, but I was just so nervous after that I didn't enjoy the gig as much as I would have done because I was always second guessing "will it happen again?" The crowd were fantastic though. They actually filmed it with ten cameras and professional sound equipment so it came out really well, we'll probably be releasing it at some point.

**You guys have been in the music business for a long time... how has the change in formats from records and CDs to MP3s affected you? What are your views on downloading music?**

I've got an iPod, and I don't have that much room in my attic for any more vinyl or CDs, so all my music is on a hard drive. I don't really get a chance to play vinyl that much anymore. I remember the good old days; we would be on tour and you'd come back with a battered box of vinyl that you'd picked up. I can see how the formats move on... if I was sixteen now what would I be doing? Why have a physical thing when you can listen on You Tube, Spotify, you can illegally download a bands complete back catalogue in twenty minutes, why would you go and pay? You just have to move with it. We're lucky; a lot of our fans are collectors and they like the physical copies of it.

**Who chose the name of the new album, a saying from Vladimir Nabokov?**

Andy came up with that... he was reading a lot about Samuel Beckett, and his work is about absurdity, which is the theme of the album. The quote from Nabokov is basically like "existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness..." basically saying your life is short, so make the most of it. Initially it probably reads a little negative but it's more kind of like "live in the moment, get the most out of it, and don't worry about the past or future."

**How did the idea for the cover of 'A Brief Crack Of Light' come about?**

He's a performance artist, Nigel Rolfe. He did the 'Troublegum' sleeve, and the 'Suicide Pact' one, and directed a video for us. We met him when we did a Troublegum show in Dublin and we invited him along, and he gave us this book, like a retrospect book... He'd been doing mad stuff since the seventies; he's good friends with Patti Smith and the rest of 'em... a lot of it involves him naked. It's very physical, there's on where he wraps tons and tons of heavy duty rope around his head which is an incredibly dangerous thing to do due to the weight of it and the breathing aspect of it... so he's quite confrontational; in the seventies he was quite outrageous. He showed us this video where he went down to some rock pools. He just dived straight into some rock pools. He said this was the latest thing he's done and we liked it, the weird symmetry of it. Our last cover was stark white on black so we wanted something a bit more that will reflect the title of the album. He's a very interesting character...

**Do you still like playing the hits, after 18/20 years?**

Yeah, yeah! We joke because we actually have hits, a lot of bands don't! They might only have one and have to play it twice. I think they're good songs too, a lot of people have invested time and energy into them over the years; they mean stuff to people, after all this time still. If I go to see Motorhead I wanna hear 'Ace Of Spades', there's certain songs you want Metallica to play.

**The first single 'Living In The Shadow Of The Terrible Thing' is a great track. The lyrics like "With heavy tread and treacle feet" are hard hitting... what does it mean, more reference to Nabokov's saying?**

It's a bit like... "What is the terrible thing?" A lot of people can have different meanings to it.

**You like to tour the whole of the UK when you come over, not just the big cities. This is very different to a lot of bands...**

When we grew up in Northern Ireland no one would play Belfast because they were too scared, so when someone we actually liked came it was a big deal. So when we started as a band we said to the managing agent "look, we'll play anywhere" you know. If we get the invite we'll try and make it work. Over the years we've been touring a lot, and there's certain countries you go back to and then you get invites to more unusual places. We've played Bosnia and Herzegovina and bands are like is it not really dangerous, and it's not really. It's a bit of a work ethic too, I love playing in a band and it's good to get the music across live.

**You've said before, and quite rightly so, "without the fans the bands are nothing". Damn right! Do you think too many bands forget this, especially those that don't have to work hard to build up a fan base, but then may lack 'fan staying power'?**

I think a lot of musicians don't realise how fleeting it can be. We've seen a lot of successes but along with that there's been ups and downs, ups and downs so it is easy to have a hit single, and then when the next ones not a hit blame everybody. Sack the manager, fuck the fans, but I'm like, surely you're making something... when we make something it's to satisfy our creative urges... that's the first thing, as long as we like it... then it's up to other people if they're willing to dig it. We're lucky that our fans are quite open-minded and they seem to like something different that comes with every record. That's what's important; the raw emotion thing. Some bands get stuck in the past and are like "urh, last time we played here there were more people." Well don't get annoyed at the people that have come to see you, be more annoyed at the people who haven't come. I've seen bands be really shitty with audiences because they haven't reacted the way they wanted them to...

**What are Therapy? up to next year? Any festivals planned?**

We have a few shows coming in; actually there are a couple of Dutch festivals we're working on at the minute... I really would like to do a good UK festival, but for some reason... I don't know whether we're too young to be considered a vintage heritage act like Motorhead or something like that, or we're too old to be considered cutting edge... I don't know; we're in a weird place in the UK. You meet these guys who book the festivals and they say "yeah love the band, love the band, maybe next year" and it's just to put us off. A lot of them are missing a trick because we have a good fan base in the UK and over the last five years people have been really on board so yeah, I'd love to do a good UK festival.

We're also working on a box set that might come out first half of next year... so there are a lot of emails flying about. We're going to re-master the four MM albums, and there's about twenty or twenty-five unreleased songs from various sessions over the years that never made it on the albums and things so I think that will be interesting for the fans. Some are mixed so hey presto, there just wasn't a suitable reason for 'em going somewhere, kind of a bit rough and ready, like jamming in the studio. It all sounds good. As a fan of bands I would probably like it. The Trouble gum live DVD will probably be in there, and maybe some old DVDs from gigs from the early 1990's, some of the first gigs we did. Some remixes, some vinyl. It'll be a big box! It can't be just three CDs... We want it to be really comprehensive... really over the top! Plus we'll start working on the next album next year after the festivals.

**Thanks!**

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article by: **Danielle Millea**

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more about **Therapy?**

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