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NEIL COOPER (THERAPY?) - INTERVIEW

Posted on October 21, 2012 by [Dave Jennings](#)

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Therapy? have been churning out quality punk rock noise since 1989 in one form or another. And they're about to release new album 'A Brief Crack of Light' and embark on a European and UK tour.

We sent [Dave Jennings](#) to chat with drummer [Neil Cooper](#) for a chat about writing and recording the album, taking the tour to some off-the-beaten track towns and what influences the band.



LTW: Your new album, 'A Brief Crack of Light' is yet another development for Therapy?, can you tell us about the creative process?

Neil: Therapy? as a unit have never really tried to stay in the same place and we feel that if we try to steer an album in a certain direction from the start, it inevitably goes wrong.

Usually we'll just get together and jam and it evolves like that, I suppose we just lock ourselves away and make a racket.

With 'Brief Crack of Light' we took things up a gear; we had the same engineer as 'Crooked Timber' but this time we were in the production seat. We recorded at Blast Studios in quite a strange way for us. It wasn't pre-planned but all the songs had been written and I went up to Newcastle early to lay some of the drums down.

But then the really bad weather set in and I was literally cut off for a while so I was left up there on my own with all the studio time drumming along to tapes of the songs and then the others came up and added their parts.

It's important everything sounds good and it all seems to have come together well.

LTW: What new influences are there on [the new album](#)?

Neil: We're not a band that plans a type of sound before we record an album, but looking back afterwards we can often identify little bits of sounds and influences in there. From a drummer's viewpoint, I think 'Why Turbulence' may be a good example.

I'd been listening to a lot of Art Blakey and other jazz and this sort of influenced my patterns. Andy on the other hand had been listening to some electronic stuff and probably drew inspiration from that but we never sit down and plan in advance. It's definitely more spontaneous and influences tend to creep in.

Andy would come with the lyrics and melodies then we'll get into a room together and riff things out between the three of us. Each song is a collaborative effort but Andy would definitely come with the theme of songs.

LTW: It's fair to say that Therapy? have never been a band that is content to stick with a set formula. You develop with each new album?

Neil: Yes we believe that evolution is important and try to do so with each album. We're really lucky because in the Therapy? fanbase there will be those who love different periods like 'Never Explain, Never Apologise' or 'Troublegum' but they know and expect each new album to be different.

If we just tried to churn out for example another '[Baby Teeth](#)' we'd be asking for trouble, we'd almost become like a jukebox. I think the three of us are in a very good place in that if we put out a record that we love and everyone else hates, we just think 'fuck it'. It



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would be easy to just make a record that sounds like your record label wants it to but when the shit hits the fan and the album gets panned, these people tend to disappear and you're left to face all the stick yourselves.

So to my mind, you may as well put out what you're happy with and be true to yourself. We're lucky to have a great following who are open minded and know that the next album could be something totally different to what they expect.

Although I can't speak for Andy, lyrically there's probably a theme between this album and the last one, 'Crooked Timber' of a realisation of how brief life is. We're only here for a short time and that's something people don't normally think about but at some stage we've all got to contemplate.

LTW: Production was shared between yourselves and Adam Sinclair, how did it work out?

Neil: Once we'd got the songs together we needed a clear idea of what we wanted from each instrument and it's sort of stepped up from 'Crooked Timber' with big drums and bass and the pedal effects that Andy wanted.

Adam knew exactly how to create each sound in the studio and get it exactly how we wanted it. It was then a four-way process of mixing the album. Adam would mix it in the studio and then send it out to us at home.

A lot of the album was done remotely as we live in different parts of the country so we'd listen at home at home, make suggestions and then Adam would act on them and send it out again for further tweaks.

Often, if you're hanging around the studio during mixing it takes forever which means you get bored, go to the pub and get pissed and you're then completely incapable of listening to it properly anyway. You do need to be completely tuned in as from a drummer's perspective, I'll hear things in a rehearsal room in a certain way but in the studio little things tend to creep in that you don't notice until the mixing stage.

It's good to have an independent perspective at the mixing stage and some bands may leave it to the producer but that's something we've never done as a band.

LTW: Andy has spoken before about the frustrations of critics trying to place Therapy? into a certain genre. Do you think people get too hung up on categorising music?

Neil: I do! We play rock band instruments and we're noisy and passionate about what we do so to that extent we're a rock band.

When I meet new people who've never heard us and try to describe our music to them it's pretty hard and I'm in the band! We're basically a punk band who listen to a lot of influences and try to come up with something a bit different.

So, I echo what Andy says, why can't we be just a band? We all enjoy creating and playing together and despite how different our stuff can be it still sounds like us. We don't go off on a tangent just for the sake of it that's for sure.

Punk is actually just an ethic when you think about it. In the early days it was people just trying to do something different, do their own thing. It's the same with the early days of techno or jazz, there's a purity and integrity about the beginning of these movements that really captures the spirit of what it's all about. It's just when the masses get involved that everything becomes bastardised and the original spirit gets lost.

LTW: Does the band ever feel that the 'Nurse' and 'Troublegum' period is used as an unfair yardstick to measure each new album with?

Neil: I wasn't in the band at the time so I can't really speak for the others but I think there's definitely a feeling that there was a lot going on in alternative rock around that time and 'Troublegum' was just sort of in the middle of all that.

When you release an album you never know what's going to happen and the guys didn't go into the studio to record it to come out and have the impact that it did. It just seemed to fit into the zeitgeist of that time I suppose.

If people asked us now to record a 'Troublegum 2' we just couldn't do it because there's no way of knowing what's going to be happening when it comes out. You just go in and try to do the best you can do and then see what impact each new album has when it comes out.

LTW: What sort of setlist will we be getting on the upcoming tour?

Neil: On this tour we'll definitely be focusing heavily on 'A Brief Crack of Light' with a few older tracks to spice it up. We're looking forward to it, five weeks across Europe, getting to places we've never been before.

It's the same when we play Britain in December, we asked the promoter for some dates in less obvious places like Wrexham. Too often you find yourself playing the same venues in the same cities and while we do appreciate the efforts people make to come and see us, it's nice for us to go to their towns for a change.

I remember growing up in Derby and you'd always have to travel to Nottingham or Leicester for gigs, but if someone actually came to Derby it was a big deal (*still is - ed*) so we're really looking forward to it.

With a great new album and a sound that defies categorisation, but is instantly recognisable to all who love them, Therapy? are still at the top of their game and well worth catching on their upcoming dates. Check out [their website for details](#).

Interview by Dave Jennings. You can read [more from Dave on LTW here](#).

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ROSS

October 21, 2012 at 16:18

Easily my least favourite LP. However, Therapy? have always been the greatest live band on the planet. Talking of playing 'less obvious places' can we have a Bournemouth date on the next tour please?!

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