



BOB MOULD

by Waleed Rashidi

Though 2005's *Body Of Song* ushered in the sea change away from electronica that Bob Mould's guitar devotees had hoped for, this year's *District Line* provides the fluke test to ensure that yes, Mould really *is* jamming with a backing band that's armed with strings and sticks. This latest Mould album places the punk rock veteran in a very comfortable position of being able to tap into his back catalog and not only find inspiration by his past, but actually use material that's nearly two decades old. The 47-year-old East Coast native also recently released his first DVD, *Circle Of Friends*, which showcases the stellar stage action of Mould, keyboardist Richard Morel, bassist Jason Narducy and drummer Brendan Canty slamming through nearly thirty years of Mould's material. And it's safe to say that some of these songs indeed sound better than they did in the '80s and '90s. Some things just get better with age.

This DVD is very overdue. Tell me about getting it together.

I wanted to document the shows, at least one of the shows. Historically, there were a lot of things going on. One, I reneged on my statement from '98 that I wouldn't ever put an electric band together again. And then with playing these songs with Brendan, Jason and Rich, it made sense to document one of these shows. Brendan has a company called Trixie, which has done the "Burn To Shine" series, and having three of us in the band being from D.C. and having Trixie here, everything converged and made it pretty obvious that we should record the D.C. show.

The shows leading up to it, like New York two days prior was sort of a racket, as it wasn't the most musical show we've ever played. And I was getting a little nervous, so the next night in Philadelphia, I suggested to everyone that we just take a deep breath and play into the stage a little deeper, and try to play music. It was pretty cacophonous for its own good. None of us were too thrilled with New York. So in Philly we sunk in a little deeper and it was a little more musical of a show, and the following night in D.C., it was one where we got our bearings back just in time and turned out that we had a great show to record. It's very representative of most of the more optimistic moments.

And the cool thing is that the backing band sounds like they've been playing with you forever. Do you feel like you've assembled the ideal backing band?

It's really a great band. We're planning on doing it again, so I think that's the testament in that we're all making time again to do this. I think the fact that we're able to carve out some time to go out and promote the record, speaks on all that. We get along great. We just play music. We don't think much about what any of it really means. It's just a bunch of songs that we play. I think that takes a lot of the pressure off.

This is your fifth backing band, and therefore you've had some experience other bands. So, comparatively, where does this one fall in the spectrum?

This is the most fun I've had since Sugar. We're all older and more responsible, so there's no craziness. We just get up, eat a meal, get on the road and go to work, but we have plenty of fun. In '98, the two guitars did not work for me. Every time I've tried that, I don't think people were really fond of that.

You had said that *Body Of Song* wasn't intentionally written as a full-band venture.

Mm-hmm.

But was *District Line* written with the full band in mind?

Yeah, I was more aware of what kind of band was in place. I layout all the stuff and then bring Brendan in. I let him hear the tracks as they exist and he puts his imprint on it. That's sort of how the stuff really comes together. I don't think I was sitting down writing and thinking about how Jason plays bass and how Rich plays keys, because when we play this stuff, I just want them to play whatever they feel comfortable with. I don't expect them to emulate the parts, *per se*.

How new or old are some of the songs on *District Line*?

Well, "Walls In Time" is a *Workbook*-era song that did not get recorded for that record. Everything else is from July 2005 to the beginning of 2007.

Tell me about connecting with Anti-.

I tried talking to labels that I thought had an audience that was



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similar to my audience, and Anti- is one of three or four labels that I could think of. Out of all the labels, they had the mechanics to do the release the way that I had envisioned it. It was the best fit of the batch. I just started up with them and everything's been good so far.

Your song "The Silence Between Us" seems like a return to some of these former ideas, like the thumping basslines of Sugar's "A Good Idea," in that you seem to have that kicking in here, too. Were you thinking that you wanted to write a more traditional Bob Mould song?

Man, they just happen.

Am I reading too far into it here?

It's an awfully diverse record. Between "The Silence Between Us" or "Stupid Now," that real four-to-the-floor stuff, yeah, that's one of 'em. And "The Silence Between Us" didn't take a long time to

write. It's going to be the single. There's a lot of stuff going on, and there are songs on the record that touch back, arrangement-wise and feel, to other songs. "Miniature Parade" reminds me of "Hoover Dam" or "Fort Knox King Solomon." I like styles that I like to revisit. "Again and Again" is very much a style that I'm comfortable with—four chords that don't really change and allow me to tell an elaborate story.

I noticed that the promotional line for this album states "plenty of guitars." Was that geared towards the longtime Bob Mould fan who wasn't sure what kind of album this would be?

Yeah. I have no problem with that. I think in this day and age I have to make things very clear. People's attention spans are short and it's like, OK, here's what's going on—it's guitars, it's pop songs, it's emotional, it's Bob (laughs). ◉