

“THERE ARE NUMEROUS MUSICAL IDEAS ON ‘GOING, GOING...’ THAT’VE NOT BEEN HEARD ON PREVIOUS WEDDING PRESENT RELEASES.”



VANISHING POINT

BACK WITH NINTH ALBUM 'GOING GOING...', JON FALCONE TALKS TO DAVID GEDGE OF THE WEDDING PRESENT.

FOR many, David Gedge is the epitome of a living legend. Beloved by John Peel (David appeared on Peel's 'This Is Your Life') and too many quality American punk bands to mention, his band, The Wedding Present has provided a steady, if regularly refreshed, outfit for his songs. With his ninth album out in September, 'Going, Going...' opens up an as of yet unseen side of his writing. While this musically contains some of the band's heaviest output since 'Seamonsters', it is accompanied by videos that represent the band's recent US travels. We caught up with David to explore an album that's both immediately recognisable as his work, yet bizarrely different to anything that's preceded it.

You describe 'Going, Going...' as a project, and the introductory four pieces are predominantly instrumental and, in a lot of ways, pretty detached from the rest of the album. What, musically, made you decide to open this record with an instrumental suite of songs? What's their purpose— are these to help you set the scene of the visual and live experience, over having a musical purpose?

"Yes, I see those first four tracks as setting the scene for 'Going, Going...' ahead of the story which unfolds in the lyrics. After the intensity of 'Kittery' and 'Greenland' I think this introductory series needed space and a couple of more reflective tracks because the first song with lyrics, 'Two Bridges' is a rocker, too. Actually, the whole mini-sequence of tracks that immediately follows 'Two Bridges' displays the heavier side of The Wedding Present.

This album feels very raw. There seems to be very little, or at least little that's noticeable, in the way of effects or post-production. How was this recorded? Did you all record together and is any of it live band performances?

"The first two Wedding Present albums, 'George Best' and 'Bizarro', were what I would call 'studio' albums in that we all recorded our parts separately. By that I mean that although the band would set up in the studio and play together, really only the drums were recorded with any real intent of them being kept. In fact, with 'George Best', they weren't even real

drums... but that's another story.

"It was explained to us how, if the guitars and bass were recorded separately, we'd be able to take more care over the sounds we used and our playing. And that's certainly true. But then we met Steve Albini. His method was, and still is, to get the band playing together while he records everything. That way, he would argue, you capture the 'feeling' of the band working as a unit, which is how the songs are usually arranged, rehearsed and played live. Albini reminded us that that's the way The Beatles did it and their records have stood the test of time. So that's how we recorded the next album, 'Seamonsters'. It took twelve days whereas 'Bizarro' had taken six weeks. And we've recorded in that fashion ever since.

"I think that's why 'Going, Going...' sounds 'live'. The only overdubs, apart from the repairing of the odd mistake, are the singing and some extra instruments. It might have some imperfections... but then so does life."

You worked once more with Andrew Scheps producing. How do you work with him and what is it you like about working with him? What makes you keep coming back for more Scheps?

"We met Andrew when we were looking for someone to mix our last album, 'Valentina'. A mutual friend suggested him as someone who'd once voiced an interest in working with The Wedding Present. I have to admit I wasn't familiar with his name initially. Then, Graeme, our guitarist at the time, said: 'Erm, you might want to Google him!' I immediately understood why he'd said that.

"Andrew's CV is incredible and when you hear his mixes you realise why. He has a great ear and on some of the songs I think he's truly given The Wedding Present our heaviest sound ever. We'd go into the control room to listen to a mix and we'd be like 'Wow. Where did that come from? It's huge.'"

There have been nineteen members of The Wedding Present over the years. What do you think it is that gives a Wedding Present album such an inimitable sound? Is it the writing? What's the secret?

"Well, I suppose any similarity in the sounds

produced by the various line-ups is going to be down to me, in that I've always been the major songwriter. So the tracks are always going to feature my style of singing and guitar playing. Or my lack of style.

"But that continuity between releases is not something I particularly strive for. Quite the reverse, whenever we start working on new material I consciously try and incorporate fresh ideas and encourage the other band-members to take us in different directions. I think there are numerous musical ideas on 'Going, Going...' that have definitely not been heard on previous Wedding Present releases.

Your previous album, 'Valentina', felt like, yeah okay, you're not a teen any more. And in 'Going, Going...' there are lyrics about drinking wine in restaurants to calm nerves before dates. This almost feels like some kind of divorcee tale about a first date from Guardian soulmates online or something. And then in 'Rachel' you romanticise skimming stones. Are these punk songs for the Radio 2 listener?

"All the lyrics on 'Going, Going...' are connected in the same way that the titles are. The whole thing is a story about a break-up and a possible reconciliation... and all the stuff that happens in-between."

'Going, Going...' is considered a road trip, and while instrumental pieces can certainly inflect that narrative to an album by their very nature, this could be called a Wedding Present album with extra bits in it. Could you tell us about how the visuals will work with the more recognisable Wedding Present format songs?

"The idea of making films as we travelled across the USA evolved at the same time as the music so the relationship between the visuals and the audio has been there from the start. I think they act as a backdrop to the story. And they're an experiment, in a way; when you watch a film set to music, your mind finds a pattern somehow, connecting the audio to the visual. It's similar to how you feel when you're walking down the street wearing headphones. I think it makes you listen to the track differently." 🍷

'Going, Going...' is out now on Scopitones