



Union

Biography

Subtle chemistry within a hard rock context. It doesn't happen too often, but it emphatically happens within the ranks of Union, even as Bruce sheepishly admits, the band managed to blow a couple of speakers at the home studio of producer Bob Marlette.

The all-encompassing, almost general rock expanse of what Bruce Kulick (ex-Kiss) and John Corabi (ex-Motley Crue) write and compose, and what their time-honored rhythm section (Jamie Hunting on bass and Brent Fitz on drums) help reproduce, yields its prodigious bounty slowly.

Indeed, The Blue Room is a record that could arguably have been constructed in any one of the last 25 years. It is unapologetic classic hard rock, written from a strong love of the Beatles, Zeppelin and Aerosmith, as well as from a vast working knowledge of '80s metal that cautions one to "Stand away from the door. Let the pros handle it." It is wide-angle, timeless, highly perceptive of society's ills and chills, and ultimately, a sound that in pieces is not unique, yet in totality speaks to an honesty in addressing and exploring complex influences.

Bruce has located the term that captures the sound of The Blue Room, and it is "big", something, which fits well to the band's pervasive, almost omniscient rock ride. "The Blue Room was a bunch of guys getting together, checking out all the ideas and developing a sound, with very little in the way of preconceived demos per se. I would also say that we weren't trying to be anything that we're not. I think we've evolved, but I think it is still what Union has always been, powerful but melodic. One thing about the new album is that it has a very big sound, bigger than the first album that's for sure. The first album touched upon that, but this whole album sounds large. There's just something very powerful about John's vocals all the time, and there are a lot of layers with the guitars. I'm very pleased with the overall vibe of us just sounding sonically very, very . . . big!"

"Ultimately I always bring my bag of tricks and we try everything," continues Bruce on this thread. "One funny thing was that I probably brought 25 guitars and our goal was to use every one of them and I think we did. It has to do with layering guitars and getting different tones, which is all part of giving you that panoramic, wide lens sound. There was a period of time not long ago when lo-fi was the hip thing to do, and I'm glad The Blue Room sounds fresh and contemporary because it counters that. It was a pleasure really, layering the guitars. It can be a little bit of work, but I just love the tones we were getting. And instead of always having the vocals just super

dry we went for some interesting effects. Not that they were slick, but they were something that made you feel that, hey, these guys mean business.”

John chalks up the record’s rock star sound to the production prowess of Bob Marlette, and the fact that the band has moved from the analog of the debut to the full-on digital of The Blue Room. “We actually recorded everything digitally so we could add or take things out as we were recording; we were actually writing as we recorded.”

“I’ve always wanted to do this,” offers John on the record’s complex vocal performances. “When I did The Scream and the Motley Crue album, I did what I knew, and that was just step up to the mic and start screaming. Here, I just wanted to try to exercise the lower part of my voice, and give each song its own persona. Whatever the song needed, if it needs a low whispery-type voice, give it that. In the past, everybody went, ‘cool, Corabi’s a belter, yeah, just sing it as high as you can.’ And I’m like, ‘well I think we’re kind of missing the boat here.’ So each song has its own personality or mood and I wanted to accentuate the music with whatever kind of voice I heard in my head. But it’s weird, we’ve even done parts in songs where I am belting but we chose to place it in the background.”

But John doesn’t sing everything. That’s actually Bruce handling lead vocals on ‘Dear Friend’, a tribute to deceased Kiss drummer Eric Carr. “One thing Bob said to us is write about things that are vital in your own lives and that was very personal for me. At the time I was doing some things regarding Eric’s career, and as soon as I heard those chords, all of a sudden I started writing the song, almost in the form of a letter to him. I mean, we aren’t a band that does a hell of a lot of party music. We’re trying to relay some messages, but overall it’s what’s real for us, what’s going on in our lives, and hopefully people can relate to that and dig into that.”

Other highlights of the record include opening salvo ‘Do Your Own Thing’ which Bruce describes as “an up-tempo, very catchy rock ‘n’ roll steamroller. It just kind of just keeps moving. And if you don’t have the hook by the first time, you’re dead. You’re not breathing (laughs).” ‘Everything’s Alright’ might remind some of classic Cheap Trick. “That’s this kind of dark trippy song. You can sit down and close your eyes and get a little dreamy with it. And again it has a very catchy chorus that just goes on forever at the end, something the Beatles used to do.”

But the crowning achievement of The Blue Room would have to be ‘Shine’ and ‘No More’, a pair of tracks designed to fit together as a one-two punch directed toward America’s consumer society, something which John has studied deeply, especially given concern for the future of the world his twelve-year-old son and his friends will inherit. “I’m really really disgusted, and I’m not trying to preach to anybody, but there’s just no parental responsibility these days for anything. You look at the school shootings. I have a little boy myself. I’ll put him to bed and I’ll look at him, and I’ll look at his little hands and those little fingers, and I think I don’t know what I would do if my son would have been in that school when that whole Columbine thing happened. There are kids my son’s age who think the only way to be cool is carry a gun to school and if anybody gives them any shit, they just blow them away. And parents have a tendency to go ‘it has nothing to do with me, it must have been that TV show he’s been watching.’ Nobody is accepting responsibility for anything. It

bothers me, but at the same time I have questions like any other parent or any other human being. What can I do that is really going to make a difference? If I could make one person listen to 'Shine' . . . that song for me, I think lyrically, is one where I really outdid myself. I really think those lyrics are awesome. I couldn't think of a way to say it better. And I'm just as guilty as the next guy. Sometimes I don't have the answers. It's really hard to be a role model in this day and age." Bruce undoubtedly rose to the challenge of John's lyrics. "'Shine' is a very interesting piece that a lot of people respond to. We used a lot of different acoustic and clean instruments as opposed to just powerful guitars, but of course they come in as well. There's a whole guitar army of acoustics to electrics, including mandolins and dobros creating this whole vibe, and it has a great chorus that to me is all of a sudden like looking up at the sky and everything is bright again."

Summing up, it's a cool thing that both chief songwriters in the band still continually grapple with what the Union sound entails, even if they have a deep understanding of the bedrock or foundation from which it springs. John: "You'll find that a lot of these bigger legendary bands had the ability to blend these different types of music, hard rock, the blues, psychedelia; the Beatles, Zeppelin, Hendrix as well. We try to do that although in many ways, its straight-ahead rock 'n' roll. The two things we try to do are have really good lyrics and good production, and we don't really pay too much attention to the style. I've come to the realization that I am what I am, and that's it. I'm not going to make the next record sound like Limp Bizkit. That's not what I grew up listening to."

Bruce underscores these points. "I'm really proud of The Blue Room. It shows growth in the band, and I think it defines it even more clearly than what we put out on the first album. I think **Union** is a terrific band which is sometimes judged by its members of former bands instead of the honest approach we have to the kind of music we like. If that is something that turns you on, that I was in Kiss, great enjoy the record. But if you don't care about Kiss, still check it out, because it's not a Kiss album. I think the music just speaks for itself. It's a record that has a lot of depth and a huge sound to it that to me, is catchy enough, yet undeniably powerful enough to really impress people."

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