

BIRDS AREN'T REAL



P R E S S K I T

P R I M A T E S S H A V E N



For up to date info & more images:
www.shavenprimates.com/presskit-birds-arent-real

INTRODUCTION

We are a 5-piece dark-wave, art-rock, proto/post-punk band, from Oxford UK & established in 2017, and we seek to push the boundaries of the genre. Our music is a narrative of human emotion and experience: fear, love and anger resonate through the orchestration, giving our audience a deeply cathartic release.

We have rumbling, grinding bass, wailing guitars and synths that flit between retro and modern, thundering, rolling drums and crooning, screaming vocals, guided by the Velvet Underground, Kate Bush, Tool, Prodigy, Yes, Clash, Bowie, Porcupine Tree, and Pink Floyd, and by our own will for making music we love.



BACKSTORY

After spending 5 years writing the epic life story album that was "Child Of Dirt", we needed to write something from scratch that was an introspective on the world, this time on "alt thought", a spin on the mesh of madness spread across the world in war, propaganda, lies, slander, hate, denial, and conspiracy. We wrote 3 songs around this along with 2 more on a perspective on the suicide of someone close, and the experiences of growing up in school with a mind that isn't compatible. This became the album: "Birds Aren't Real".

FADE AWAY

<https://soundcloud.com/shavenprimates/fade-away/s-3tPbGsW11tt>

Inspired by the Louis Theroux interviews with YouTubers Nick Fuentes and Baked Alaska, this song is about the rise of fascism in social media. It uses late 70s and early 80s elements of punk & post punk, breaking down into recent synth techniques and a chorus that grabs the emotion behind pressures of the modern age. Guitarist Tom Clark created the opening rolling intro riff and we built it up from there.

A DECISION

<https://soundcloud.com/shavenprimates/a-decision/s-vCisWaXTuoy>

Recently, someone close took their own life in a decided fashion, with planning and some insinuation along the way, so this song is about that and how it took effect on those close to them. With this we went for a gothic, early 80s sound and production technique, with symphonic, orchestral layers to represent the impact of the dire event.

SILICON IMPLANTS

<https://soundcloud.com/shavenprimates/silicon-implants/s-YPh4h3BxY5h>

This song is a run down of current observations, mentioning many current events and comparing it with historic knowledge to remind people of repeating the past. The line "Nazis Bad" is intended to reflect on the washing down of terminology in online arguments, alongside the excuse used to justify the Ukraine war, and how words are twisted currently so that known norms are shattered in the way that things aren't what they seem so that second guessing causes it to be weaponised. The song refers to Nietzsche for his misrepresentation in starting WWII, Aldous (Huxley) for his signature book "Brave New World" which details how people become complacent to what's happening in the world via technology, Rabia's intentions in the Middle East versus how it's rolled out to a power grabbing dictatorship, and Kafka rolling his eyes over the same thing Huxley predicted: a humanity that claims to know all that's occurring in the world.

Yes, all this is covered in the madness of this song, with the rapid beat down blues track, fast Homesick Blues vocals, its random yet deliberate keys and guitar work, and the bass line that's up front and pinning you to listen.

UNMASKED

<https://soundcloud.com/shavenprimates/unmasked/s-xTUXQG3Sfb6>

2 stories told here: 1 is from the perspective of an undiagnosed autistic child in the past who endured school despite none of it working for him, and that of a diagnosed autistic child who is getting the attention he deserves. The song is a praise to those who find their way in learning their difficulty, that they aren't themselves broken, and that they can now be confident in being themselves. It uses a delicate verse to emulate the classroom, and gave the chorus an elevating yet ongoing feeling for the full impact of the chorus.

BIRDS AREN'T REAL

<https://soundcloud.com/shavenprimates/birds-arent-real/s-lnP5bpAwDxP>

Well, isn't it obvious? Birds are clearly a ploy created by the government, made entirely of cybernetic organisms set out to monitor our every movement! It explores the viewpoint of an alternative truth that a person might latch onto, with a Spanish affinity for no good reason other than we liked it, and a sudden punk throwback for the chorus.

PAST PRAISE

Even while rock music lingers on the sidelines hoping to make a comeback, prog remains its uncool cousin whose very existence is denied even by those who privately retain an affection for it. So a warm – and doubtless suitably ostentatious – welcome to Shaven Primates, a band for whom elaborate song structures, virtuoso flights of fancy and technical prowess are worn proudly – and loudly.

The band's debut EP even comes with a concept: the story behind singer Mark Elphinstone's recovery from meningitis, which left with him with no memory and needing to relearn pretty much everything. Not that he appears to be lacking in any of necessary skills here, providing a variously harsh, rasping, desperate or wailing vocal centrepiece to the often elongated musical journeys that retain a caustic, imperious disdain for simplicity or lo-fi values.

'Child of Dirt' in particular traverses mood swings and stylistic detours to emerge like some powerhouse approximation of Tool cranking out the angriest passages from Pink Floyd's 'The Wall'. Elsewhere soaring keys hint at Keith Emerson, spiced-up guitar solos veer into Robert Fripp's airspace and Elphinstone's epic, questing vocals bring a bit of The Who's 'Tommy' to the party. EP closer 'Outside' initially feels like an aberration compared to the rest of the songs here, like a wild pier-end blues revue where Muddy Waters and Tom Waits are shouting and fighting in almost comical fashion over the last riff in the jar, but it has a mania about it and an almost Doors-like vibe in its dark-side-of-the-drunken- blues and overall, for all their technique and technology, Shaven Primates come armed with more than enough substance and power to earn your love as well as your respect.

Ian Chesterton, Nightshift Magazine

It's not very often you're sent an album from a new band that pulls you in straight away.

Firstly, I have to say that the music on this debut album from Shaven Primates is compelling even on first listening.

Yes it's progressive, but it doesn't sound like it's trying to be progressive. It's quite a unique sound with layered influences throughout.

After a third or fourth listening it becomes quite apparent that you're being taken on a journey, a journey through one person's eyes on addiction, trauma, pain and struggle, a journey through one person's life. That person is the vocalist with Shaven Primates, Mark Elphinstone.

Child Of Dirt seems to be the autobiographical narrative that flows through the album, so in that respect you could squarely put it in the area of a concept album.

The music, lyrics and vocals are visceral, dark and ultimately cathartic, reminding me of the same musical and lyrical vocabulary used by artists like Roger Walters, Peter Hammill or Jim Morrison

The music is deep, immersive and expertly executed. When you think this was a self funded album you really have to take your hat off to the band. There is some fantastic guitar work on the album, keyboards that paint a dark sonic landscape and the rhythm section drives every track.

I normally pick favourite tracks, but in this case I suggest you listen to the album as a whole. Being conceptual in nature and the life journey of an individual, you need to spend some time and experience that journey. Isn't that the point of concept albums?

All in all, a highly recommended album from a band that actually has something to say.

Andy Philips, ProgAxia

Oxford's Shaven Primates are a 5-piece band citing a broad range of styles and genres – including progressive rock, dark-wave, art-rock and post-punk, amongst others. Inspired by David Bowie's death in 2016, and the solace vocalist Mark Elphinstone found in his music whilst going through therapy, the concept of an album chronicling the dark, personal history of his youth gradually took shape. His fellow band members developed the music over the next couple of years, the result being this first full-length album.

Over seven jagged and emotionally charged songs, Mark reveals his personal journey through sexual, physical and emotional abuse as a child, and hard drugs, alcohol and sex addiction in his early 20s. His emotive vocals are a challenging listen for sure, but they certainly match the emotional feel of the subject – whether it is screaming anger, deepest fear or yearning love. They also integrate well with the dynamic and varied instrumental palette used by the rest of the band.

The sound of children playing and a subtle piano introduces the opening title track, but soon a driving rhythm from Nick Letellier (bass) and Jarod Ganoë (drums) propels the song into deeper territory, supporting keyboards from Neil Barry flowing around Waters-style angst-ridden vocals. Languid one minute and intense the next, Tom Clark delivers a flowing guitar solo towards the end, creating an intriguing and vibrant start to the album.

As church sounds recede, a reverberating bass and chiming guitar patterns begin On the Bleeding Edge, and now Mark's vocals are spat out with a punky, Alex Harvey-like manic venom and the music adds to the sinister, nightmarish atmosphere. The Zoo begins serenely, the harmonised vocals having a touch of Bowie or Hammill to them, before atmospheric keyboards and a dense rhythm raise the intensity and fearful screams take us into the epic Three Piece Suite. From animal noises and rumbling bass, the multi-faceted track twists and turns with theatrical, Zappa-style vocals, along with hints of The Wall-era Roger Waters bitterness. The tempo and intensity ebbs and flows, with Tool-like metal guitar chords and stabbing keyboards, all building towards a manic conclusion.

Outside has a deceptively catchy, strolling beat and musical soundscape, but is contrasted by raw and deranged Beefheart-like tones. Driving heavy rock and a rolling drum and bass beat pushes through Mind and makes it one of the most accessible tracks – getting the head nodding nicely, with some effective guitar soloing to savour. The start of final track Answers is the album's highlight for me and is where all the wildly varied strands seem to effectively knit together. Spacey keyboards and guitar duel around each other and Mark's vocals are almost mainstream here. However, don't be fooled by the minute of silence that follows. You are soon bombarded by rising and falling multi-tracked vocals and an extended section of Floydian electronic ambience which takes us further into the recesses of Mark's troubled mind. A scattering of nightmarish visions and soundbites swirl around before fading away – surprisingly immersive but also deeply unsettling.

Best played in one sitting, Child of Dirt is a demanding, dense and eclectic experience, but it is a cathartic and emotional one. Progressive in the true sense and continually pushing genre boundaries, it is true that the spectrum of vocals on display will not be to everyone's taste. However, for the more adventurous listener, there is much to explore on this dark and intense ride, and Shaven Primates' ambition and talent is to be applauded.

David Edwards

A Different Aspect #70 – The Progressive Aspect – TPA

ACHIEVEMENTS

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