

EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL

It has been three years since the release of Everything But The Girl's 1996 milestone album *Walking Wounded*, but Ben Watt and Tracey Thorn are finally following it up with their ninth studio album entitled *Temperamental*.

INTERIM

The early part of the three intervening years was filled by the ninety-nine date *Walking Wounded World Tour* that took them to fifteen countries and lasted over a year, ending in Japan in April 1997. Ben then promoted his autobiographical book, *Patient* --a campaign that eventually took him to the States for the book's 1997 US publication. Since then there have been two collaborations - Tracey made a low-key appearance singing a song on the 1997 debut album by rising drum n bass star Adam F, and more recently she and Ben teamed up with Washington DC house specialists, Deep Dish, to write and feature on one of the crossover club hits of 1998, *The Future Of The Future*. And in 1998 Ben produced, programmed and performed on two tracks for the second album by Beth Orton, *'Central Reservation'*. He has also recently provided two instrumental tracks for the forthcoming Hal Hartley film, *The Book of Life*, starring Martin Donovan and PJ Harvey.

NEW ALBUM INFLUENCES

But perhaps most importantly for the duo's own music, Ben undertook a period of sustained underground club DJing, that began as a diverting passion but started to take him closer and closer to the sound he and Tracey realised they wanted for their next album. Ben says: "I was proud of the new ground we broke with *Walking Wounded* but I saw that we wanted to get to the next level - similar grooves and detailed songs but finding room for deeper, fatter sounds and beats. Regular DJing opened my ears to such possibilities."

In 1996 and 1997 Ben played drum n bass and freestyle DJ sets across America, and took over Howie B's slot at West London's eclectic Sunday nighter at The Paradise By Way Of Kensla Green. He then took up two proper residencies in London - the first spinning drum n bass at Bar Rhumba's 1997 Friday night breakbeat session, *Transition*, and then shifting tack, opening his own hugely successful current Sunday evening session of deep house, *Lazy Dog*, in April 1998 at Notting Hill Arts Club. *Lazy Dog* was set up with friend and DJ partner, Jay Hannan, who until early 1999 was house music guru and shop manager at London's seminal dance music shop, *Black Market Records*. Ben's drum n bass sets have led to several guest spots at two of London's foremost authentic drum n bass nights, *Swerve* and *Movement*, whilst *Lazy Dog* is currently packed with deep house lovers every Sunday.

PRODUCTION

The new album, produced by Ben, has clearly been enriched by these experiences, and in particular by the styles Ben and Tracey have been most affected by – deep soulful house (Five Fathoms, Temperamental, Lullaby of Clubland), hard jazzy drum n bass rollers (Blame, Compression) and sweet funk and hip hop (Low Tide Of The Night, Downhill Racer). There is one, new collaboration, Blame, which features beats and a bassline from Metalheadz' J Majik, and also a new edit of last year's The Future Of The Future with music and programming by Deep Dish. The album was prepared and recorded over a period of two years at EBTG'S own studio, Little Joey's in London. Ben cut several work-in-progress acetates of various dubs and backing tracks and roadtested them in his DJ sets before the mix stage. His drum n bass plates at the time were spun by top DJs Fabio and Ray Keith. The final album mixdown took place at Air Studios in London in March 1999, with Ben and his mix engineer from Walking Wounded, Andy Bradfield, at the controls.

VOCALS

"When it came to the vocals, I encouraged Ben to experiment with my voice more," says Tracey. "New sounds, dubbier ideas, but without losing sight of that intense one-to-one feeling we got on Walking Wounded. We made use of spoken word, falsetto, vocal filters, tiny fragments of my voice as percussion. After I had sung the lead vocals, Ben would often trawl through my ad libs and old takes and sample additional notes and sounds, chopping them back into the tune for new counter-rhythms. Sometimes he would find vocal samples from other singers, which I would mimic or sing along to. The original was then removed, leaving me, but somehow sounding different. All this kind of stuff became sort of backing vocals. It was a new approach for us."

LYRICS

"I was out in the city so much," Ben says. "At night in midweek clubs, coming home alone from Djing, during the day record shopping, watching people, feeling changed by what I saw, absorbing. It spoke to me a lot. A lot of my lyrics explore this, I think."

"Similarly, Hatfield 1980 is a true night time story from my teens", says Tracey.

Other lyrics on the album include Blame that Tracey originally wrote for an unfinished collaboration with Massive Attack for the 1997 feature film, Welcome To Sarajevo. "Massive were ultimately unhappy with the song's arrangement and the track was amicably abandoned. They kept the music, some of which went into Mezzanine. We kept the lyrics." Says Tracey.

KEY ALBUM CREDITS

Titles Five Fathoms (Watt), Low Tide Of The Night (Watt), Blame (Thorn/Watt), Hatfield 1980 (Thorn/Watt), Temperamental (Watt), Compression (Watt), Downhill Racer (Thorn/Watt), Lullaby Of Clubland (Watt), No Difference (Thorn/Watt), The Future Of The Future (Watt/Deep Dish)

Tracey Thorn Vocals

Ben Watt Beats, Basslines, Keyboards, Guitars, Strings, Samples, Sound Editing and Programming

Produced and Engineered by Ben Watt

Mixed by Andy Bradfield and Ben Watt

Additional production on Blame by J Majik and Danny Jay

Primary production on The Future Of The Future by Deep Dish

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For more background, see EBTG's massive 65 page website, written, conceived and updated by the band themselves.