

CHOSEN

RESOLUTION



THE MAKING OF A DEBUT ALBUM

In the summer of 2009, having just completed a successful Canada-wide tour, we made the announcement that the band was calling it quits. Up until that point, Chosen had released a number of well-received and independent demos, gone through a few line-up changes and, most notably, relocated from Ireland to Vancouver, Canada for a year. Upon returning home after the Canadian tour, the plan was to record the long-awaited debut album at Komodo Studios with producer Alwyn Walker. However, the numerous clashes of ambitions and personalities saw to it that no such plan ever came to pass.

Given that half of the band promptly quit after the tour, citing personal reasons, we just decided it best to announce we were throwing in the towel rather than put up adverts looking for new musicians. Yet the truth of the matter is that we were never going to be comfortable letting all those songs be consigned to the depths of memories.

Deep down we felt the material deserved to be recorded properly. These were songs we had worked hard on, obsessed over, and allowed to consume us as the compositions filled our heads for days, weeks and, in some cases, even years. Reforming the band and completing what we initially set out to do was the only way we could truly move on. Ready and willing to reinvent ourselves, we began the whole process by recording our own parts for the album first (the drums and guitars) at Komodo Studios. This took approximately four weeks, with some 12-hour days being clocked as is often the case when working to a tight budget. We then used a rough mix of the album to try and recruit new members with whom to complete the record.

Of course, this particular endeavour was fraught with various dead ends and unforeseen mishaps, but such is the nature of working with other active musicians who are committed to their own projects. After a few failed attempts at establishing a workable line-up, we eventually made the radical decision to continue as a two-piece band instead. Perhaps it was something we should have done a long time ago but that's the beauty of hindsight. While completing the album in such a particular fashion was not something we could have ever predicted it was certainly one of the best decisions we ever made in the history of the band.



By the time we came to the realisation that we would be completing the album ourselves, it was the beginning of 2012 and our producer Alwyn had since relocated from Komodo to Westland Studios in Dublin. Naturally, this was of huge benefit to us as it allowed the album to be mixed on the studio's legendary SSL console.

We also re-amped the guitars which significantly changed the guitar sound from the one we first captured at Komodo. And so, after working tirelessly on writing and recording bass parts, vocal melodies and lyrics, we promptly completed the album at Westland over a number of different sessions throughout 2012.

From that point on the album was instantly transformed from the incomplete piece of work it once was into a tightly woven combination of songs. All that remained was to finalise the song order and begin putting together the album artwork in preparation for its inevitable release to the public. What you hold in your hands is a document of the creative process that went into the creation of our debut album.

As you can see, it contains expanded artwork, courtesy of Fiaz Farrelly, numerous pictures, both professional and our own personal snaps, lyrical themes for each song, studio diaries, and some of our thoughts on various aspects of the value of music in today's new digital world.

There is something to be said for sumptuous artwork when it has been reproduced to a reasonable size, in which its richness, detail and impact can be fully appreciated. Part of our rationale for releasing this Collector's Edition of Resolution is because we relish the opportunity to present our music as a piece of communicative art. CD booklets are all well and good but they only provide a mere snapshot in comparison to what can be presented through either an LP or, in this case, an art book. Perhaps, it is something that will be revived in the future as people tire of the digitisation of media. For now, we hope that you thoroughly enjoy this art book and that it enhances your appreciation of the work that goes into the production of good music.

Chosen, March 2013



DRUM TRACKING DAVID MCCANN

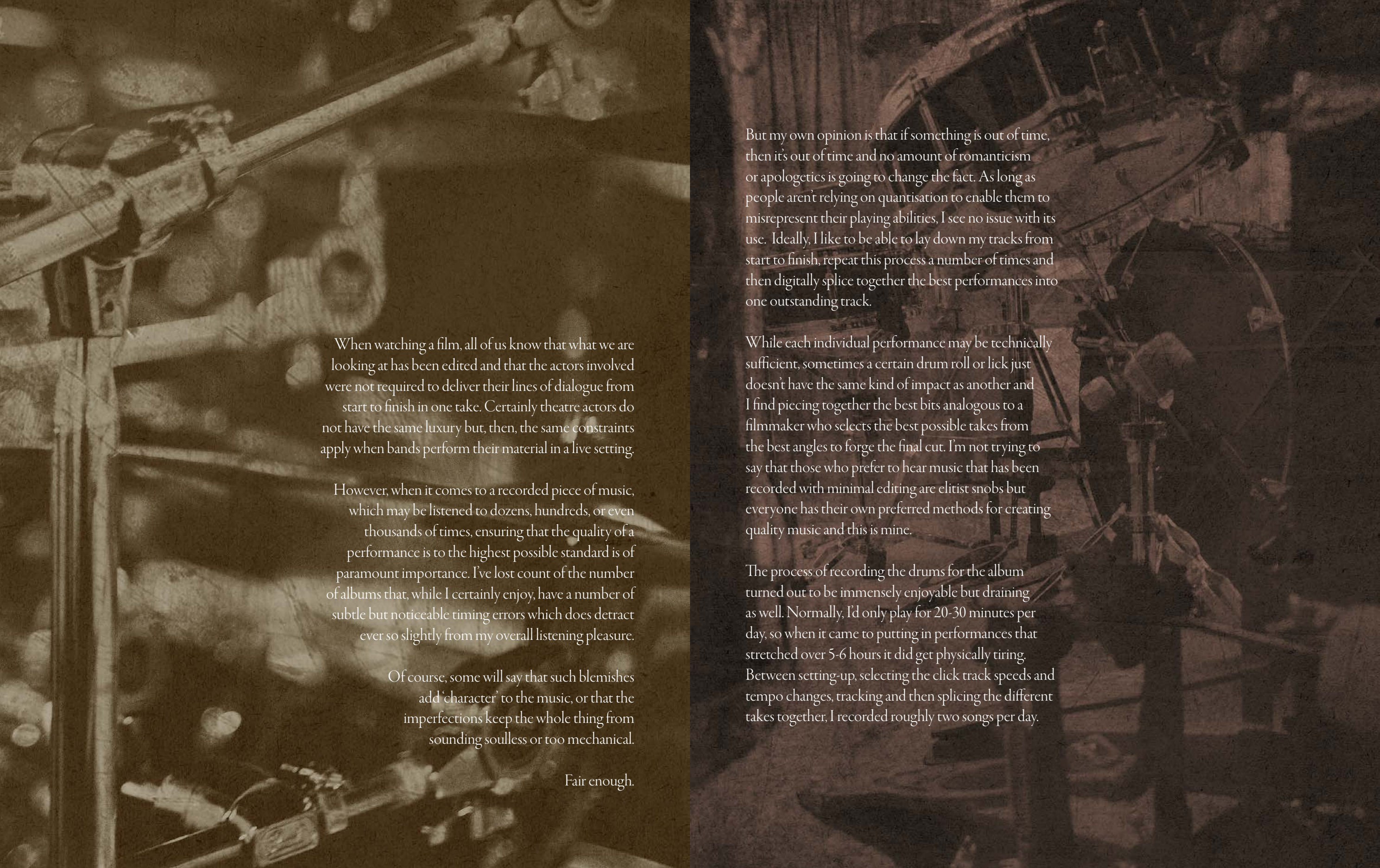
For those who are not aware, Chosen recorded a short demo in 2006 at Komodo Studios with Alwyn Walker, and because of how well we all worked together we knew that Alwyn would be our long-time producer for any future professional recordings. For this album, Alwyn secured the use of a large hall just down the road from the studio, in which we would capture a more 'live' drum sound. The hall had wooden floors and lots of natural reverb, which made it the perfect environment for what we wanted to achieve. On the first day, we assembled the drums in the main part of the hall, with Alwyn placing an array of microphones on the kit, as well as around the hall in order to capture the acoustics of the room.

Some 27 channels were used for the drums, which sounds quite excessive but, then again, there were a lot of drums and cymbals to take into account. Equipment-wise, I brought absolutely everything with me. Since 2005, I have pretty much used the exact same configuration save for a few new cymbals I purchased in Canada.

While I am right-handed, I do like to play open-handed as much as possible, hence why I position hi-hats, crashes, chinas, splashes and ride cymbals on both sides of the kit. Although my Export Series shells were far from being ideal, Alwyn did a superb job tuning them to get a deep, thumping tom sound (12", 13", 14", and 16"). The snare drums sounded fine, being Firecracker (12") and Free-Floating (14") models, and as for the kick drums (22"), we swapped out the standard drum heads and mounted mesh ones instead.

This allowed us to trigger the kick drums whilst minimising the sound of the felt beater striking the drumhead, thus, avoiding any unwanted spill being picked up by the surrounding microphones. Had we not used the mesh heads, Alwyn would have had a lot more headaches and EQ to do. We used clear Remo Pinstripes on the toms (which were changed for a fresh set after 6 songs) and coated Remo Ambassadors on the snares. While it might seem odd that I chose to trigger the kick drums when the purpose of using the hall was to capture a more 'live' drum sound, the simple fact is that when playing high-velocity kick drum patterns without triggers, the sound can get very muddled and often loses its overall clarity.

Any purists who might object ought to consider that virtually all acoustic kick drums are processed with compressors, gates and EQ, and so the natural sound of your typical kick drum is rarely what one gets to hear on any finished record. Triggers also force a drummer to seriously tighten up their playing as mistakes will be crystal clear and not conveniently buried within the cluttered frenzy of 16th notes at fast tempos. Speaking of tightening up one's playing; now that digital editing has become the norm in recording studios, some people may be wondering whether I digitally edit or 'quantise' my drum parts. While I would never advocate the use of quantisation to enhance playing that is clearly beyond the natural abilities of a drummer, I have no qualms about using it to help sharpen up a few parts where it's necessary. This is mainly because a recorded piece of music comes under heavy scrutiny on repeated listens. At the end of the day, a recording is supposed to be an ideal representation of one's work and of how others perceive the sound and composition.



When watching a film, all of us know that what we are looking at has been edited and that the actors involved were not required to deliver their lines of dialogue from start to finish in one take. Certainly theatre actors do not have the same luxury but, then, the same constraints apply when bands perform their material in a live setting.

However, when it comes to a recorded piece of music, which may be listened to dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of times, ensuring that the quality of a performance is to the highest possible standard is of paramount importance. I've lost count of the number of albums that, while I certainly enjoy, have a number of subtle but noticeable timing errors which does detract ever so slightly from my overall listening pleasure.

Of course, some will say that such blemishes add 'character' to the music, or that the imperfections keep the whole thing from sounding soulless or too mechanical.

Fair enough.

But my own opinion is that if something is out of time, then it's out of time and no amount of romanticism or apologetics is going to change the fact. As long as people aren't relying on quantisation to enable them to misrepresent their playing abilities, I see no issue with its use. Ideally, I like to be able to lay down my tracks from start to finish, repeat this process a number of times and then digitally splice together the best performances into one outstanding track.

While each individual performance may be technically sufficient, sometimes a certain drum roll or lick just doesn't have the same kind of impact as another and I find piecing together the best bits analogous to a filmmaker who selects the best possible takes from the best angles to forge the final cut. I'm not trying to say that those who prefer to hear music that has been recorded with minimal editing are elitist snobs but everyone has their own preferred methods for creating quality music and this is mine.

The process of recording the drums for the album turned out to be immensely enjoyable but draining as well. Normally, I'd only play for 20-30 minutes per day, so when it came to putting in performances that stretched over 5-6 hours it did get physically tiring. Between setting-up, selecting the click track speeds and tempo changes, tracking and then splicing the different takes together, I recorded roughly two songs per day.

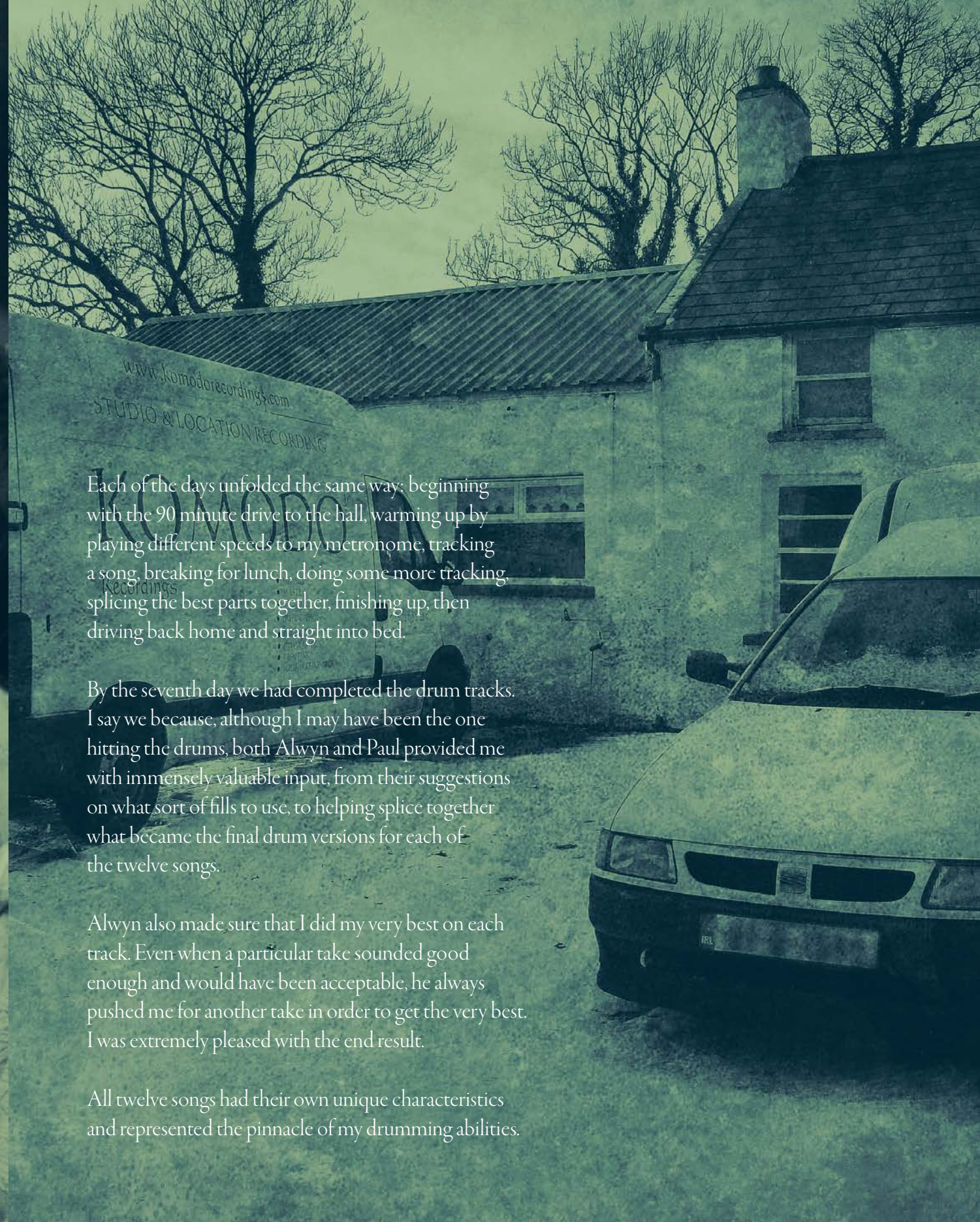


Each of the days unfolded the same way: beginning with the 90 minute drive to the hall, warming up by playing different speeds to my metronome, tracking a song, breaking for lunch, doing some more tracking, splicing the best parts together, finishing up, then driving back home and straight into bed.

By the seventh day we had completed the drum tracks. I say we because, although I may have been the one hitting the drums, both Alwyn and Paul provided me with immensely valuable input, from their suggestions on what sort of fills to use, to helping splice together what became the final drum versions for each of the twelve songs.

Alwyn also made sure that I did my very best on each track. Even when a particular take sounded good enough and would have been acceptable, he always pushed me for another take in order to get the very best. I was extremely pleased with the end result.


All twelve songs had their own unique characteristics and represented the pinnacle of my drumming abilities.






GUITAR, BASS AND VOCAL TRACKING PAUL SHIELDS

The process of recording the guitars took place at Komodo Studios immediately after the drums were captured. Prior to the first day of guitar tracking Alwyn had given me a rough recording of the drums (including the click track) so that I could rehearse my playing. Practising along with the drums and click track really helped me to prepare and get through the guitars in the time that I did. I spent 10 days doing all the guitars (including solos).



We double-tracked every song and, using small overdubs, 'beefed' up certain parts that we felt needed to cut through more in the mix. I used a few different guitars and amps on this recording.

For the guitars I used the Schecter C7 Blackjack (tuned to A) and the Jackson DXMG (tuned to D). There were a combination of heads and cabs used which included a Mesa Boogie Dual Rectifier and a Laney GH100L, both of which were driving an ENGL 4 X 12 and a Laney 4 X 12. For the overall guitar sound, I didn't want gain-heavy tone as I prefer clarity to distortion so we rolled the gain back a bit and I pumped the Ibanez Tube Screamer to get the sustain I needed.



In order to get the best out of every riff I used different plectrums for certain sections to make them sound the best they could. There was one song in particular for which I used 14 different plectrums in total.

Some of the riffs were quite challenging but Alwyn assisted greatly in getting the best performance out of me. In some cases we made slight alterations to a few riffs throughout the recording process, always for the better.

When it came to recording the bass guitar, it had been some time since we completed the drums and guitars. Alwyn was now based in Westland Studios, Dublin where we would complete the album.

To prepare myself, I spent a great deal of time writing bass lines that would really contrast with the guitars and not sound like what a typical guitarist would play if they had to record some bass over their own parts.

This is where I have the late Cliff Burton to thank for inspiration. Perhaps it's a cliché to cite one of metal music's most innovate and memorable bassists as my guide, but I can't tell a lie. The ending of The Departure Lounge is really where I pay homage in the most obvious way, with the wah pedal cranked for full effect.

Equipment-wise, I mainly used a 4-string Tanglewood Curbow but decided to put a set of 5-string strings on it in order to achieve the correct tension. This meant that we had to drill a bigger hole in the bridge to fit the strings on. I didn't want a 'nice' or 'clean' sounding bass so we cranked an Ampeg head to the point of valve distortion allowing the bass tone to sit in with the guitar tone perfectly.

As with the guitar tracking, we ended up changing some bass lines in the studio whilst recording. I did some finger picking on certain parts of the album but I mostly used a plectrum to get the correct attack on the strings. The plects didn't last very long as it was like playing a bass with four metal ropes! All in all, I tracked the bass parts in 4 days.



For the vocals I recorded over two separate sets of studio dates, beginning with the heavy vocals and then ending with the clean.

Both sessions were a few months apart as the studio was heavily booked up throughout 2012.

However, the waiting period gave me lots of time to work on my technique. In preparation, I took all the vocal coaching I got and spent countless hours each week at our rehearsal studio to demo the album numerous times in order to get an idea of what sounded good and what didn't.

When the time came for tracking the vocals I knew exactly what type of heavy scream (highs, mids or lows) would suit the songs and bring out the best in them.



Westland
STUDIOS

Recording the clean vocals took a lot of work as we decided to utilise a 'layering' technique in which the main vocal track is comprised of between 4 and 8 separate layers. In other words, this meant having to sing the same lines up to eight different times, making sure that they all synched up in unison with one another. I spent 7 days in total doing all the heavy and clean vocals.

David and Alwyn were a great help during those days. Their input on both pronunciation and delivery was invaluable. I'm quite proud of what I achieved. While it's not the first time I have sung on a recording, as I have some previous singing experience in past bands, this is my first vocal performance in almost 13 years and is undeniably my best to date.



GUEST MUSICIANS

Without a shadow of a doubt, this album would not have turned out the way it did without the help of some very talented people willing to lend their time, skill and creativity to some of the songs. We were extremely fortunate in knowing a number of people within our extended network of friends whom we thought could add something special to what we had created as a two-piece outfit. Although we were confident in performing as many different instruments ourselves, we were never once opposed to bringing in some outside help to add the finishing touches.

PAUL ALLEN – SOUND FX / SYNTH

From the very start we knew that some of the songs would require strings and synth sounds to enhance certain parts. Paul, a dance music DJ, composed a number of different sound effects and samples for us that were used on the songs Defective Propection and Diminishment.

JACKIE MCNALLY – VOCALS

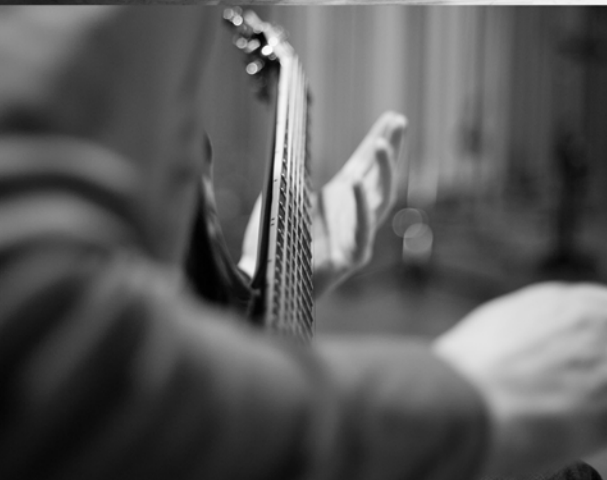
Jackie contributed a number of distinctive vocal parts to the album. Initially, we had arranged for her to sing on The Corollaries of Doubt, but after hearing the results we quickly realised that many of the other songs could benefit greatly from her voice. In the end, and over a number of recording sessions at our rehearsal space, she tracked vocals for Defective Propection, Instinct, Asch's Paradigm and Manufacturing Victims.

FIONA MORRIN – FIDDLE

We felt that the intro section to The Narcissism Epidemic was a bit weak sounding with just the acoustic guitar by itself. Fiona was more than happy to play fiddle over this section (again, at our own rehearsal space) and was extremely patient with us considering we had to ask her to come back and play it a second time because we wanted to mic up the fiddle a different way.

ALWYN WALKER – BACKING VOCALS

Aside from all of the many creative ideas that Alwyn brought to this album, it wouldn't be fair to omit his vocal contribution to one of our favourite songs. Clearing his throat with a mighty cough, he added his voice to the outro section of Defection Propection in one take, which is buried in there along with both Paul's voice as well as David's.





THE SONGWRITING PROCESS

What's most remarkable about the entire songwriting process is that creativity and inspiration can strike at any time. For instance, The Narcissism Epidemic was composed by Paul during one of his days at work in Vancouver. Using his phone's basic audio recorder, he began humming various melodies and riffs into it over the course of an 8-hour working day at the office and then assembled the whole thing on the guitar later that evening after work. It just goes to show that not all songs are written in the band room or even when one has their instrument in hand.

That said, the process of writing the majority of the other songs for the album followed a number of similar lines:

- i) Paul either composed a song from start to finish;
- ii) Paul compiled a list of riffs and David selected which riffs to work on and what order they were to be arranged in;
- iii) both Paul and David came up with ideas and riffs in the band room and worked on putting them into an arrangement that hadn't been completed

Some of the songs on Resolution went through various different stages before reaching their current layouts, while others have remained the exact same since they were first written.

When it came to composing the vocal parts for the songs, we both took a collaborative approach and mapped out where exactly we wanted there to be heavy and clean singing. Originally, we had very few vocal parts on the songs, thinking that we just needed the bare minimum in order to escape the mantle of 'instrumental metal band'.

Just to clarify, becoming an instrumental band was an idea we once seriously toyed with but it's generally considered a death knell by many (at least when it comes to the metal genre) and so we wanted to provide some semblance of vocals in order to keep the listener interested. However, as the weeks of vocal pre-production went by, the greater the number of ideas and melodies we discovered and wanted to express.

Lyrics never really entered the picture until the vocal patterns and melodies were finalised. Basically, we would come up with vocal parts by just repeating a few words or a sound until we were totally satisfied with the structure.

Then the task was to write suitable lyrics that could fit into this pattern, taking into account that the syllables had to be near exact but that the lyrics also made sense. Thankfully, the English language has so many words which share similar meaning, which allowed us to sculpt suitable lyrics which contained some kind of relevant theme. Overall, as a process, it was actually quite enjoyable. Only one or two words were changed during the vocal tracking stage at Westland Studios.

MUSIC IN THE DIGITAL AGE

In the last number of years, it has become more noticeable that (mostly new) bands are starting to give away their music, with a hardcopy being offered for sale. But many enthusiasts question why bands and artists would stoop to giving away their music. “Are you crazy? You’re devaluing your art by not charging something for it. Show some pride and self-respect for your work.” So, in as short an explanation as possible, here’s the multifaceted reasoning behind our choice to release Resolution for free:

We have already gotten what we need from this album. Being able to finally hear the fruits of our labours in serene production brings more satisfaction than any number of sales ever could. And, honestly, sharing it with as many people as possible is more rewarding for us instead of trying to recoup recording costs. A lot of musicians profess they aren’t in it for the money and yet, at the same time, complain about downloading or about having to drop the price of their own CDs just so people will be more inclined to buy them. Did it ever occur to these particular musicians that maybe music as a consumer product has been overpriced since day one? Have any of them ever seriously considered that given the music industry is now oversaturated on every level, it has meant that for someone seeking new and innovative artists means having to find a needle in an industrial-sized warehouse full of needles?

Since this is undeniably the case, doesn’t it make more sense for artists and bands to give their music away for free instead of just one or two sample tracks and expecting payment for the rest?


To illustrate the point: it’s a well-known fact that the sale of CDs has never been that much of a profit-making enterprise for musicians (even signed artists) unless the sales figures skyrocket into the millions. Even independent artists selling direct to the customer have to shift a very large amount of hardcopies before receiving a sizeable return on their initial investment. From direct payments through one’s website, you then have to deduct the cost of manufacturing and duplication, the worldwide postage rate, the padded envelope, and any administration fees (as with PayPal for example).

And that’s not even factoring in the overall cost of the recording itself or any money spent on publicity materials (magazine adverts and banners) either. So then, the question looms large: is that amount of expense really worth hindering the spread of your music to so many people in this world who have unlimited entertainment choices at the touch of a few buttons? Nowadays, nobody needs to spend money in order to find decent entertainment. Just look at the phenomenon of viral videos online, all of which are absolutely free of charge (even if their creators have spent copious amounts of time and effort making them).

Another important point is that music fans are no longer just passive consumers. Because of the democratisation of recording technologies, they have become empowered with the freedom of unlimited choice and creativity at their fingertips. Yet giving away music doesn’t necessarily mean the complete end of hardcopy sales. There will always be those die-hard fans who’ll want a CD, vinyl or an art book for their coveted collection. In fact, putting an entire album up online could very well drive hardcopies of some CD and vinyl sales in the long run.

How so? Well, haven’t all of us at some point bought albums which we thought sounded good at first, only to experience buyer’s remorse a few weeks later? Consumers aren’t so quick to part with their cash anymore. Many people today simply download an album before they commit to purchase, and it’s a growing trend among music fans that may continue long into the future.

Perhaps what everyone needs to understand is that today’s music business is largely based on an outmoded model. All evidence points to perpetual change yet there are those on both sides of the line (artists and industry professionals) who are still trying to cling to the past. Try as they may, in recent years things have gotten progressively ‘worse’ from a business perspective and sooner or later the decay could get to the point where we may actually see the death of many different enterprises within the music industry save for the most profitable of companies. The music scene, however, isn’t shrinking or dying off. It has simply migrated to the internet. Fans who would’ve once attended numerous shows to see local and touring acts now save their time and money by logging onto YouTube.



People generally have lots of things competing for their entertainment spending money and in an oversaturated market it's a very delicate time to be trying to convince people to pay for something which they haven't been able to sample for themselves through and through.

At the end of the day, many of us are in the same boat: whether you're an unsigned band releasing a debut album, or an established movie producer launching a tried-and-tested film franchise, a lot of people are going to consume these things without paying any money for the experience. Technology has revolutionised how everyone acquires all kinds of media, and if musicians are not prepared to adjust to new changes they can expect to get left behind spinning their tyres in the mud of old ideals.

While many fans are still as passionate as ever about their favourite music, the day people realised they didn't have to pay anything to gain access to quality music was the day everything changed. And this fad of everyone and their entire circle of friends making music is probably not going to go away either. There are, undoubtedly, more people playing music today than ever before. Perhaps once certain musicians figure out that they're never going to get that career-making record contract, or even sell many of their CDs, they might lose interest and find another creative endeavour. But in all likelihood, even if they did go away they'd be replaced by some other aspiring group of contenders and, thus, the cycle continues ad infinitum.

It's actually ludicrous that some people believe that because they can write a song they somehow deserve to make a living playing their own music simply because someone else got the opportunity to do so. Lots of people also win the lottery too. That doesn't mean all of us are going to become winners for having bought heaps of tickets. It doesn't work that way. Moreover, the music industry doesn't work that way. It never really did and it never will either. Watch any episode of American Idol or X Factor for the proof. Hallways filled with ambitious, young hopefuls, with big dreams, varying degrees of talent and, in a lot of cases, an overbearing sense of entitlement and their own optimism and self-serving biases. Aside from these being entertainment shows, what the viewers are really witnessing is an abundance of ambition in the face of underwhelming odds.

This mind-set exists in all genres too, not just commercial pop music. Indie labels, venues, magazines, and their ilk receive vast quantities of albums, EPs and demos each week from every kind of artist and group cooing about how great they are and that they have 'something to offer'.

Let's face it, our world is oversaturated with content. Everyone is now a content creator of some sort and not just concerning music. Blogging, YouTube, Flickr, Photobucket, Twitter, Facebook; everyone has a voice, bestowed upon them by the worldwide network of computers known as the internet. In relation to releasing music, what this means is that musicians have to seriously get smart if they want to be heard over the thousands of others who can shout just as loud.

It goes without saying that the perceived value of music has dropped significantly over the years. This is simply how it is. No amount of appeals to morals or romanticising the past is going to undue this epochal change. Instead, it's time to wake up. The evidence is all around us. It's time for those on the moral high ground to step down for a second and start thinking logically. As a musician, do you want your music in the hands of as many people as possible or not? Rather than dragging your heels, continuing with an outdated business model attempting to sell your wares to fewer people (who most likely have fifty other bands marketing their music at them in a similar fashion and not enough spending power to purchase everyone's demo or album), why not make it your goal to simply get your message out there first and worry about the profit margins later?

Getting heard in this day and age is hard enough, never mind trying to make some kind of coin doing it as well. Music is supposed to be fun and enjoyable. It wasn't always a consumer product either but, rather, a communal activity that many cultures engaged in (and still do) as a means of experiencing pleasure and solidarity through collective ritual, subjective expression, and even creative storytelling. When it comes to the genre of metal, the writing is on the wall: there's little money to be made through recording and touring anymore as an upcoming band. Unless it's a hugely commercial sound (and even then there's no guarantee) the odds are stacked against being able to go anywhere but into a financial hole.

While most of us in bands are stuck in monotonous jobs each week that suck the life out of us at the best of times, looking to the music industry now (at this point in time) for some kind of escape from a 'boring, dull life' is ridiculous. Yet it seems that's what so many people are fixated on. Instead, why not make music a kick ass hobby, keep it fun, and enjoy it until you die? If musicians don't like the idea of having their music downloaded, then it's very simple: avoid releasing it into the public domain. Stay in the rehearsal room, keep the recordings private and they won't ever have to worry about it.

But, seriously, who wants to do that?

To reiterate, the money we spent on recording this album gladly came from our pockets so that we could enjoy the listening experience until the day we shuffle off this mortal coil. We recorded it both for ourselves and to spread a message; nothing else. As writers and performers of this original music, we are happiest when more and more people are listening to our songs, not making back the money we put into the creating and recording process.

That's not to say we're ungrateful when people do make a purchase or give us a donation but we will endeavour to keep creating music as it's something we love doing. Are we the first band to ever give their entire album away for free? Of course not. But we believe in this new method of exposure and it's something more and more bands might benefit greatly from in the oversaturated market that surrounds every facet of our popular culture. The sooner bands give up trying to fight a system that is outdated and start giving their music away for free (thereby making it more accessible) the sooner they'll be on their way to gaining more fans and popularity, which is what they really want in the end and not money, right?

After all, the majority of people will usually dedicate themselves to indulging their creativity whether other people pay them to do so or not.

THE ART OF RESOLUTION

FIAZ FARRELLY

The guys asked me if I'd write a piece on the process of the artwork and how I arrived at what we've used for the finished product. I immediately said yes, without thinking that I'd never done something like this! Except for when I was in art college and I was trying to justify one of my projects or ideas to a lecturer.

This, however is a different thing altogether. This is art created by me for something that I truly believe in and am into myself wholeheartedly.

We started with the band's logo, band photography and the eventual art for the music.

I approached the process by meeting with the guys a few months prior to have a listening session to the album to make some notes; see what the music itself sparks off in my head. I took the notes away and started some free fall thinking to determine the type of imagery I'd use. After a lengthy period of trying every kind of idea I could as well as imagery that was related to each respective song's subject I met the guys again with my ideas. We all went through each one and they gave me some initial feedback on what I'd come up with. It was overwhelmingly positive.

However, on going away and starting work on this, it became apparent we'd need the cover art first for use in promotional material, interviews and reviews. I'd never approached a cd design in this manner before. What I mean is; I'd never done the cover first. Usually, I'd develop the booklet and the 'inside' first and the cover always fell into place after that. After some serious brain storming with myself, and suggesting a good variety of solutions that I thought would work as a cover (bearing in mind that we'd always agreed that the artwork should be distinctly not your typical metal related art) the guys chose what we now see as the cover for Resolution.

With the cover now in place, the entire booklet's ideas were pretty much defunct. It was clear that the booklet(s) should follow suit. Which is how I ended up with what I did. I nailed the core of the idea for each song as I knew already that we'd be using a different type of imagery for each song on both discs and went out with my camera and spent days collecting imagery. The thing that dictated what would end up in the booklet was that we would use what we had around us in that we weren't going down a stock photography route or some kind of composite of imagery.

I was walking to get a bus after a day of photographing in Dublin and glanced to my right and immediately saw the image that ended up as being "Metaphysical Contradiction". Granted, I had to get down on my knees and risk looking crazy in front of hundreds of pedestrians but it didn't matter because I knew this was going to be a great image. I was very happy when I got home and it worked. The typography too, just worked with this particular page. That was it! Once I'd gotten the first one done, I knew that the rest would just start to fall in place. I don't know how, I just knew.

So, one by one, trial after trial, each song worked itself out. Though, I'm leaving out the many hours spent pouring over my images and studying each one till I found something that might work as there was still lyrics to consider and how they'd work on the images. It can be quite a trying process but it's very fulfilling for me on a level I can't explain.

Using the original colour scheme that ended up being the cover, I made sure that dictated the rest of the layout and created a variation on the greens and blues present in the image itself.

I also wanted to keep a certain level of consistency throughout (despite there being so many different types of imagery in this layout) using those colours and textures. The greens and blues used in Resolution compliment the browns used in the second disc design of Resolution. This was all deliberate. The second cover image came out of the first round of cover choices and ultimately helped to finish off the second layout. I used the same process for the creation of that booklet, backliner and disc.

With this art book we wanted to expand a little on some of the artwork used in the disc layouts as well as adding in photographs taken over the process of putting this album together; i.e. in studio photography. It all added to the extensive liner notes the guys have written themselves on their own journey creating this body of music, as well as their intentions and motivations behind how they're releasing this into the world and at the same time giving the dedicated music and art lover something to acquire and feel like they've spent money on something worthwhile. Something heartfelt, done with all integrity intact with no want of diluting it with some sort of commercial pursuit.

And to clarify, I mean the motivations for this work.

So, I hope this resonates with the fans of Chosen's music and ultimately, is woven into the fabric of time along with the fabulous piece of work my friends in Chosen have put together as they go hand in hand in my opinion.

Onwards and upwards.

Fiaz Farrelly, March 2013.

RESOLUTION

noun

1. a resolve or determination: to make a firm resolution to do something
2. the mental state or quality of being resolved or resolute; firmness of purpose



ENGINES OF BELIEF

Superstition, the belief in magic, witches, daemons, ghosts and other similar delusions have been around for as long as there have been human cultures. In contrast, the scientific method of critically assessing the nature of claims is only a few hundred years old. Our brains are belief engines that make connections which appear to make sense to us but are often far from being accurate. Anecdotal thinking comes naturally to humans, whereas critical thinking requires training and self-determination to look beyond the seemingly obvious for a more likely explanation. While a lot of popular delusions are often benign and harmless, in many cases they can lead to serious consequences. From people with cancer opting for homeopathic cures and other New Age remedies, to animals being hunted to the brink of extinction so that their tusks can be ground into powder that gets sold for 'treating' common human ailments, there is no shortage of examples where human delusions are having a negative impact on members of both our own species as well as those of others.

Yet, try as we might to educate people on the folly of their ways, superstitious thinking is not something that can be easily eliminated. Many individuals are naturally inclined to dismiss contrasting views and will cling to their beliefs, even in the face of hard evidence. This propensity makes it significantly troublesome in trying to get people to change their minds and subsequent behaviour. Moreover, it can also provoke facetious retaliation, as many will often respond to criticism by engaging in crusades of misrepresentation, ad hominem arguments, shifting the burden of proof, and even outright lies against those who simply ask them to back up their claims with verifiable evidence. Even certain social movements and paranoid conspiracy theorists are prone to the same kind of specious reasoning that buttresses superstitious beliefs.

Although in their case many of them would like to think they see 'the truth' and are much more free and enlightened than the masses of 'sheeple' whom they look down upon. But counting the hits and ignoring the misses is not good science and leads only to illusory patterns and erroneous conclusions. The hypocrisy of these particular people is that they are all in favour of 'questioning' just not of their alternative theories. This does not mean that governments never tell lies or that all conspiracies are false but there does appear to be an abundance of individuals who love to display their ignorance posing as intelligent people.

Centuries ago, most people believed in witchcraft. However, that belief has almost vanished in Western countries today. So then, while there is no apparent reason why the same thing should not happen to some of the more contemporary superstitions and New Age beliefs of our time, many people remain enthralled by such delusions. While humans have been abasing themselves to many such endeavours since the days of prehistory, we have also been endowed with one of the most complex and sophisticated organs in the world (the brain). Yet, in a cruel twist of irony, we are more capable than any other species at fooling ourselves with false beliefs, self-deception and wishful thinking, based on a need to control the course of our lives.

FACTS OF THE WORLD FILTERED BY OUR BRAINS / THROUGH THE COLOURED
LENSES OF OUR WORLDVIEWS / TO AUGMENT A SENSE OF CONTROL /
SELF-IMPOSED IGNORANCE / ALL SENSE OF REASON IS GONE / LOOK WHAT IT
HAS DONE / REMEMBERING THE ANOMALIES / FORGETTING THE MUNDANE
/ SELECTIVE MEMORY / EMOTION IS THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING / OUR
PROCLIVITY TO THESE DELUSIONS / SELF-IMPOSED IGNORANCE / ALL SENSE OF
REASON IS GONE / LOOK WHAT IT HAS DONE / SUPERSTITION AND FALLACIES /
IMMUNE TO ATTACK FROM EDUCATION AND LOGIC / THIS IS OUR END

DEFECTIVE PROSPECTION

Perhaps, the three most important decisions we come to make in our adult lives is where we want to live, what we want to do with ourselves and who we want to spend our time with. Contemporary life can be extremely complex and competitive in nature, even at the best of times. From a young age we are told to do well in school so that we can go to college, get a good job and, hence, be able to afford a certain lifestyle that will provide us with happiness and allow us to look after ourselves and the people we care about. But as we all know, not everyone gets to become successful or has their ambitions fulfilled. And with bookstores crammed full of self-help titles and similar get-rich-quick schemes abound, we are clearly living in an age where rising expectations and crushing realities collide every single day.

Part of life is dealing with the inevitability that unpredictable things can and do happen, and that we all must live with some degree of uncertainty. Many individuals often question the direction they've taken in life. They wonder whether they have made the right choices or are, perhaps, disillusioned because their current choices have not provided them with the fulfilment and excitement they sorely anticipated. What we choose to make of ourselves in life is something that not everyone figures out in the same fashion. Some people seem to know exactly what they want, while others tread a different path, trying on various roles for size. But often, people work hard towards a momentous goal thinking that as soon as it is achieved they will find everlasting happiness and contentment, only to be bitterly disappointed when the moment finally arrives.

One of the defining features of humanity is that we think about the future in ways that no other animal can or does. Prospection is the act of looking forward in time or considering the future; a mental process facilitated by the frontal lobes of our brains. But just how accurate are we at predicting how we will react to future events, both good and bad? While we can step into imaginary tomorrows, projecting ourselves forwards in time and experience, our ability to visualise accurately is fraught with imperfection. Instead of being the logical, calculating machines that we like to think ourselves as, we regularly mispredict our emotional responses to future events. This encompasses everything from successfully forecasting our future feelings upon winning the lottery or becoming famous, to having children or even being paralysed in an accident.

When we imagine our future circumstances, we unconsciously fill in details that won't really come to pass and leave out many details that will. Just as we don't recall every little detail of past events, so too do we fail to conjure up every feature of a future occurrence. So while most of us enjoy unprecedented freedom to pursue whatever we think will make us happy in life, the true reality is much more counter-intuitive. That, although thinking about the future in positive ways can be extremely pleasurable for us, we tend to overestimate both the probability that such good events will actually happen, as well as the likelihood that they will grant us the lasting satisfaction we think they will.

IMAGINARY EVENTS WE FORESEE
PROJECTING OURSELVES THROUGHOUT TIME
WE KNOW HOW EASY IT IS TO PREDICT
FROM THE BLIND SPOT OF OUR MIND'S EYE

TIME OBSESSED
WITH FUTURE EVENTS
WE ARE TIME OBSESSED
WE CANNOT RESIST THE URGE

MISUNDERSTAND THE ALLURE OF CAREERS
ATTACHED TO HOW SOMETHING WILL FEEL
WE ALL HAVE EXPECTATIONS THAT AREN'T MET
THE HUMAN FOCUSING ILLUSION

TIME OBSESSED
WITH FUTURE EVENTS
WE ARE TIME OBSESSED
WE CANNOT RESIST THE URGE

YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN DEVISING
FORECAST FULFILMENT
CONTENTMENT CAN'T BE QUENCHED SO EASILY
DEFECTIVE PROSPECTION

THE WORLD IS A MIXTURE OF COMFORTING ILLUSIONS
SOME OF US DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT
DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO
I'LL SAVOUR IT A BIT
I'LL TREASURE IT ALL FOR YOU

THE NARCISSISM EPIDEMIC

Today, it seems, we are caught up in an on-going societal trend of cultural narcissism. For the last number of years there has been a huge surge in image projection activities, celebrity worship, cosmetic surgeries and the acquisition of material goods and conspicuous consumption. Websites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and the like, allow everyone to post videos, photos and news items directly focusing on themselves regardless of how trivial it may be. While human beings have always engaged in various self-promoting behaviours, to either elicit approval from others and/or attract a mate, we are beginning to see whole new levels of self-admiration, attention seeking and narcissism among people.

Those with high levels of narcissism see themselves as being superior to others, deserving of special treatment and reverence. They often boast, at length, of their various achievements (while blaming others for their failures and shortcomings), turn the focus of conversations back to themselves, and jump at any opportunities to garner attention and fame. Narcissists also lack a great deal of empathy, which means they have little concern for other people and will often manipulate and exploit others in order to make themselves look better and feel good. Contrary to popular belief, narcissists do not have low self-esteem but are actually extremely high in self-esteem, hence why they think themselves so superior to others and that they should be the centre of attention.

Of course, having an inflated sense of self doesn't make them immune to poor emotional and mental health such as displaying rage and aggression (when their perceived genius is not recognised), anxiety and even depression. In fact, many narcissists destroy their personal lives through their actions. Vanity and self-centredness eventually drive other people away, and the consequences of trying to live a lavish lifestyle on easy credit are also well-documented. This current global epidemic of narcissism has hooked millions of young people into becoming self-obsessed addicts. They are the product of a culture that glorifies wealth, beauty, glamour and fame, and are convinced they are truly outstanding individuals despite any flaws. As a result, many have traded reality for a world of fantasy and feel they are entitled to whatever they want.

Everywhere we look, we can see narcissistic attitudes being validated. From advertising slogans telling us we're worth it, or that we ought to express ourselves, to celebrity news and reality TV shows which rely on the drama of self-absorbed characters engaging in both confrontational and self-aggrandising behaviours, there is no shortage of illuminating examples. While not everyone may be a true narcissist, many people are feeling the pressure to self-promote in such new ways in order to stay afloat in a much vainer, materialistic but, ultimately, shallower world. It appears as though our culture finds narcissism much more acceptable and, in many cases, even laudatory. And because it is such a common trait displayed in abundance it can, therefore, encourage narcissism among the more humble. But, the question remains, are we happier as a result when we focus so heavily on ourselves?

THE APPEARANCE OBSESSION
A LIFE CENTRED ON RECOGNITION
SELF-AGGRANDISE
WE'RE DESTROYING OUR LIVES
THROUGH SELF-CENTREDNESS
ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

WHEN YOU LIE TO YOURSELF
LOOK AT ME ON DISPLAY
CONDUCTING OURSELVES
WITH GRAND INFLATION

WE ARE LIVING IN AN
AGE OF ENTITLEMENT
THE NARCISSISM EPIDEMIC

WHEN YOU LIE TO OTHERS
OBSESSED WITH OURSELVES
TO AVOID FEELING INSIGNIFICANT

WE ARE LIVING IN AN
AGE OF ENTITLEMENT
THE NARCISSISM EPIDEMIC

SELF-ADMIRATION
CULTURE IN LOVE WITH ITSELF
PLEASURE IS FLEETING
AN ENDLESS ABYSS THAT
CONSUMES US ALL

MENTAL CLARITY

Christopher Nolan's 2010 film Inception explored an extremely vivid, albeit fictional, world of dream manipulation and the ability to navigate through the unconscious minds of others in order to extract or implant certain information. While shared dreaming is, presently, only an imaginary concept, many aspects of the film were quite accurate, such as the capacity for dreamers to manifest artificial realities in which almost anything is possible. Given that all of us spend roughly one third of our lives asleep, and one third of that time dreaming, just what can we get up to in our dreams? Is it possible for us to ever become aware that we are dreaming and, subsequently, exert some degree of control over our unconscious projections? Or will the experience of dreaming be nothing more than a collage of vague and fragmented cognitive shadows in which we are but private spectators?

When we fall asleep, we enter into an alternative state of consciousness and go through a number of repetitious cycles, one of which involves rapid eye movement (REM) where all of our dreaming actually takes places. Most of the time, we are never aware that we're dreaming until we wake up and realise that it was a dream. Often, the strange nature or illogical features of the dream do not seem to be out of place to us while we are dreaming. Furthermore, we can experience intense emotions and bizarre sensations within certain dreams. We also do not recall every single dream we have, and the dreams we do remember tend to be the ones that were closest to when we woke up. But some people experience what is referred to as a lucid dream, in which they 'wake up' inside their dream and know that they are dreaming. Many lucid dreamers report being able to do almost anything they want, like flying or altering the scenery of their dreamscapes. In essence, the laws of physics and the 'rules' of the real world do not apply and the lucid dreamer quickly becomes the unconstrained architect of their own limitless inner worlds.

Unfortunately, lucid dreaming is sometimes conflated with some New Age beliefs such as astral projection and other pseudoscientific notions. The crucial difference is that lucid dreams are recognised as internally generated experiences of the human brain and have been verified with the use of systematic analysis, which includes brain scans. Lucid dreaming, then, is a scientifically proven phenomenon even if it is not yet fully understood as to why some of us gain the ability to become aware that we are dreaming. Most people report having at least one lucid dream in their lifetime, while a small number of individuals can experience them as often as once or twice a week. However, lucid dreams cannot always be wilfully induced and although there are a number of popular techniques in use as to how to increase the likelihood of experiencing one, for most people there is still a certain luck factor involved. Nevertheless, when attained, lucid dreams can grant one significantly more freedom to roam inside their imaginations and experience unbounded adventures, otherworldly scenarios and exhilarating possibilities, all in a safe and private environment of their own making.



YOU WITNESS ONE SIDE OF TWO WORLDS / IT IS MENTAL CLARITY
/ A LIVING ALTERNATIVE / REALITY MANIFESTS ITSELF / WANTING
SOMETHING DOESN'T MAKE IT REAL / OUR UNCONSCIOUS
MINDS ARE AT WORK / TAP INTO ITS MECHANISMS / IT HAS NO
PHYSICAL LAWS / A SHAPE-SHIFTING FACE / POSSIBILITIES / WHEN
WE ARE ASLEEP / CREATING INNER WORLDS / MENTAL CLARITY
/ WANTING SOMETHING DOESN'T MAKE IT REAL / THE EDGE
OF HUMAN EVOLUTION / A MENTAL TIGHTROPE / VERITABLE
BALANCING ACT / WITH NO CONSEQUENCE

DIMINISHMENT

The modern world can be a stressful, lonely and frightening place at times. It's a world filled with all kinds of people, where many suffer in silence while the rest of the planet goes about its business. It's a world with a fixed definition of what success, accomplishment and happiness looks like, and is visibly projected everywhere, making many of us feel inadequate, isolated and alone, depending on our circumstances. It's a place that can feel painfully unforgiving of difference or sadness. And it's a world where there are some who reach a point inside themselves where they feel the only peace they can achieve is through the act of dying.

Suicide is both a complex issue and a polarising topic. Cases of suicide are always tragic affairs which often leave those that are left behind, such as friends and family, in a state of shock, loss, and even intense anger. But although many hold the view that suicide is an act of pure selfishness, it is far too simplistic and unfair to stigmatise suicide, boldly asserting that those who are, obviously, feeling at the lowest point in their lives have some kind of obligation to persevere for the benefit of their loved ones. Is it not self-serving to want someone who does not wish to be alive to stick around so that other people don't get upset? Do the needs of the many always outweigh the needs of the few? While we might like to think that whatever it was that prompted such a person to vacate this world may have abated in time, or with outside help, we do not have the luxury of seeing directly into their experience of life or walking in their shoes for that matter.

From living with mental illness, feelings of worthlessness, addiction, lack of stability, disaffection, loneliness, loss, hopelessness, lack of income, no home or family to rely on, there are a variety of characteristics and circumstances that can make the ultimate decision to end one's life seem like it is the only viable option left.

Although it is always deeply saddening that there are those who see no future for themselves and feel that the only choice left is to end their lives, everyone has the right to handle their own life in their own way. For the greatest human right is that of self-ownership. Of course, it can be extremely difficult, almost incomprehensible, to understand why some people choose to end their lives. But to moralise and condemn those who simply want a way out of their pain is not going to help address the scale of this societal issue. And surely the desperation that is felt by the suicidal person is so overwhelming that, in such a state of mind, they can't see another way out of their psychological anguish. Alas, human experience is different for everyone but life is not something to be forced upon those who no longer wish to participate.

While there aren't any easy answers, and the devastation suicide leaves in its wake is substantial, we must try to reach out to those who are vulnerable, with empathy, compassion and understanding. This is not as easy as we might think, given that we live in a world where feelings are often bottled-up and hidden, either out of shame, guilt or embarrassment. The stigma that surrounds mental health is profound, given how some people go to their deaths having never said a word or given any indication that they wanted out. Suicide, then, can be considered a silent killer.

FACING INDIFFERENCE
A CAGE INSIDE OURSELVES
THE AGONIES AND INDIGNITIES OF MODERN LIFE
WE'RE ALIENATED
A PRISON OF THE MIND
QUIET DESPERATION

CONCRETE SITUATIONS
HAVE I AN OBLIGATION TO LIVE FOR OTHERS?
IN DESPAIR
OVERWHELMED

I CAN'T SEE A WAY OUT
FOR A MULTITUDE OF REASONS
YOU DON'T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS

ENCAPSULATED WITHIN THE SPECTRUM OF DESPAIR
A HAUNTING IMMERSION IN PRIVATE DARKNESS
IT WOULD BE MUCH EASIER NOT TO DO THIS ANYMORE

CONCRETE SITUATIONS
HAVE I AN OBLIGATION TO LIVE FOR OTHERS?
IN DESPAIR
OVERWHELMED

SELF-MEDICATING
TO RELIEVE THE INCESSANT PAIN
I JUST WANT TO BE NORMAL BUT I WILL NEVER BE
I'M DISILLUSIONED
I CAN'T MAKE IT THROUGH THE DAYS
THEY'LL NEVER SEE ME AGAIN

INSTINCT

We human beings are astonishing creatures of evolution. Adaptable, inquisitive and persistent, we have gradually ascended to the top of the animal kingdom, in terms of overall intelligence and dominance, and now live in a wondrous industrial age of vast information, knowledge, abundant food sources, material wealth, advanced technology, life-saving medicines, and endless choices over leisure and entertainment activities. But, as a species, we are not actually designed for this current version of the modern world. Although we can be quite sophisticated, logical and articulate, we carry around with us the genetic baggage of our ancient ancestors who dwelled in a more primitive and hostile environment, and it's this inherited baggage which is the root cause of our somewhat irrational, unpredictable and impulsive behaviours.



Nevertheless, we should still express immense gratitude to those higher primates and the blind process of natural selection for shaping us into the fascinating beings that we are. It is nothing short of amazing that we are alive today and possess a conscious awareness of our existence and place in the world. For if the conditions some five million years ago had been much different, our hominid ancestors may never have been forced to adapt to life on the African savannah, and we could, for argument's sake, still be swinging from tree to tree, chewing on plant life and vegetation, completely unaware of the stunning complexity of life that exists in the known universe. Each and every one of us is part of a great evolutionary story that has played out over millions of years. But just what are our bodies for?

Objectively speaking, we are all biological machines, programmed by evolutionary mechanisms to survive and replicate. Replication is a form of genetic survival; a technical means of survival that has been evolutionary designed into us. Although the word 'designed' might imply that there must be a designer, evolution is a completely blind process. This is not the same thing as being random but, rather, can be surmised as: whatever works, works. While evolution is responsible for producing some wondrously beautiful and adaptive creations, it has also caused unimaginable suffering on the part of countless individuals and whole species as well.

Evolution can be brutal and is most certainly indifferent to the plight of its subjects. In fact, almost 99% of the species that ever existed on this planet are now extinct. Evolution, then, is considered the underlying characteristic of the inexorable forces of nature at work. As biological machines, our minds and bodies have been 'programmed' to help us survive and reproduce, thus ensuring our genes are passed on and make it into the next generation. Everything from our nervous systems to our emotional circuitry has evolved in order to motivate us to engage in certain behaviours that are essential to survival and reproduction. And the process of successfully attracting a mate is, unquestionably, the single most powerful underlying force in all human psychology, behaviour and motivation. It is what most defines us. While we may be the only animal that can ponder deep existential thoughts, we are still very much instinctual beings.

WHAT KIND OF LIFE FORM GAVE RISE TO THEE?
THEY WERE ABLE TO SURVIVE AND PASS ON THEIR GENES
OUR ANCESTORS ADAPTED TO BLIND FORCES
PROLIFERATION OF THE FEW

PROPAGATION
REPLICATION
DIFFERENTIAL GENE REPRODUCTIONS

EVOLUTION
NATURAL SELECTION
PERPETUATING
WE'RE BIOLOGICAL MACHINES
REPLICATION
DRIVEN BY FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS
SELFISH GENES
INSTINCT

WE ARE DESIGNED FOR A MORE PRIMITIVE WORLD
THAN THE ONE IN WHICH WE NOW LIVE

IF WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND
THE BEHAVIOURS AND MOTIVATIONS WE HAVE
EXAMINING WHERE WE CAME FROM
THE CONDITIONS UNDER
WHICH WE ALL EVOLVED



ASCH'S PARADIGM

Try as we might to deny the very nature of ourselves, that we either don't like or would rather not think about, our efforts to be completely individual are, ultimately, in vain. No matter how self-contained, self-determined or individualistic we might feel, the human race is designed in such a way that what other people say and do has a profound influence on the way we think, feel and behave. As evolved apes, that imitate and mimic one another, our prime feature is social nature. And despite the current cultural emphasis on individualism in the Western world, as a people we become who we are with and through others.

The influence of other people is found in almost every aspect of our lives. We cannot escape it. Even when we try to pretend that we're somehow superior to the 'ignorant masses' and 'conformists', we are all conformists of something, whether it be social norms or our choices in popular clothing, music, ideas, and so forth. Of course, many people are uncomfortable with this discovery and do not like the idea of being some sort of a 'conformist' or a 'cog in the machine'. In their eyes, the act of following others would make them feel like brainwashed idiots; something to be avoided at all costs. In fact, this particular line of thought has been used to market 'alternative' clothing (among other things) to impressionable youths and other cultural rebels who want to stand out from the 'mainstream' and display their superior status. In some cases, it has even managed to inspire misguided acts of mass-conformity masquerading as cultural rebellion and individualism.

The irony is that if people truly wanted to be unique, they could easily achieve it by acting completely random. Yet, this is seldom done. Rather, it's not really individuality people are after but distinction; a way of being different that sets them apart from certain others but that also makes them recognisable as a member of an exclusive group. And what are groups if not conformists of some kind? However, people are not always self-aware of the causes of their conformity which makes trying to address it very challenging. 'Other people conform', they might say, 'but not me.'

The psychologist Solomon Asch once conducted a series of experiments which demonstrated how social conformity can take place in groups of humans. Asch established that the influence of others can be the key to how we see things and shape our subsequent behaviour. More recently, discoveries in anthropology, neuroscience and evolutionary psychology have begun to establish that humans are built to be interactive and interdependent herd animals, not unlike those of other social animals in the natural world. Simply put, we are programmed to be together and to take our cues from one another. This does not mean we can never free ourselves from traditional ways of thinking, which are all too often reinforced by the things we surround ourselves with in society, but it is of vital importance to recognise the role that other people play in our lives. While each of us may be a unique human being on this planet, with a firm sense of our individual identity, we still imitate and copy others and we often do it without even being aware of the fact.

ALL MY LIFE I SEE EVERYONE
DECIDER OF OUR FATE IS WITHIN US ALL
NO ONE WANTS TO BE ACCOUNTABLE
TO WALK THE PATH UNSEEN BY ALL
WHAT WE'RE RUNNING FROM

YOU'RE UNDER
DROWNING IN IT
IT'S A SEA OF SURRENDER
INEVITABLE

REALISE THAT YOU'RE ALREADY TORN
FROM THE FALSE PROTECTION OF DISCONFORMITY
THERE'S NOTHING UNIQUE TO YOUR LIFE
WE'RE PREDISPOSED TO ACT ALIKE

THE SOCIETY MOULDS YOU
THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF YOUR LIFE
THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH IS INESCAPABLE
AS TO HOW WE ALL CONDUCT OURSELVES

CAUSES ARE INFLUENCED BY OTHERS
NOT IN ISOLATION

REALISE THAT YOU'RE ALREADY TORN
FROM THE FALSE PROTECTION OF DISCONFORMITY
THERE'S NOTHING UNIQUE TO YOUR LIFE
WE'RE PREDISPOSED TO ACT ALIKE

AM I FREE ON MY OWN?
INDIVIDUAL
CAN I BREATHE ON MY OWN?
INDIVIDUAL
DISMANTLE MY EGO
INDIVIDUAL
COLLECTIVE IDENTITY
INDIVIDUAL

METAPHYSICAL CONTRADICTION

The topic of religion often comes up in many public debates amongst believers and non-believers alike, from the role religion plays in contemporary life, to the different beliefs and claims of the faithful, as well as the argument over the likelihood of there actually being an all-loving, all-knowing supernatural entity and what valid evidence there is for such a thing. Religion has, undeniably, been a pervasive and powerful force throughout human history but its once profound answers have become more and more outdated and eclipsed by modern scientific discoveries coupled with the new epoch of free-thinking brought about by the Enlightenment. All primitive human cultures once believed that thunder and lightning were gods expressing their emotions but most of us now know that such weather has a much better explanation. However, despite this basic comprehension, many believers still attribute certain aspects of the natural world, such as earthquakes and other natural disasters, to the will of their particular god, not to mention crediting said being for sparing those who happen to survive such disasters.

The many arguments for and against the concept of a god (or gods) are age old and vast in number. Perhaps one of the most puzzling and contradictory of such counter arguments to the sceptical enquiry of religion is that of god being outside of all space, time and matter. This rebuttal is often trotted out in order to declare that god is not a scientifically testable hypothesis; that there is a realm beyond the natural world which is off limits to science or any other modes of critical thought. Thus, so it is said, science cannot demonstrate that god doesn't exist, nor can it question the 'mysterious ways' in which such a supernatural being decides to interact with the natural world. Yet, the glaring paradox in this kind of defensive manoeuvre, intended to disarm the sceptic, is that it completely undermines the position of the believer.

This is especially the case when we consider how often the devoutly religious claim to possess knowledge of the divine, acting as though they know what god wants. But how exactly can a material being (a human) have any knowledge of an immaterial being (such as a god) while simultaneously trying to assert that science cannot understand it? Either there is a realm beyond the natural that has no correspondence with the natural, in which case none of us can have any knowledge of it. Or there is some immaterial realm that does interact with the natural, in which case science can say something about it.

It is deeply perplexing how many believers will in one breath say that atheists and agnostics cannot possibly dismiss such an entity as god, who is outside of our mortal comprehension, but in the next breath claim to possess a deep understanding of what such a being wants and that we ought to worship it. Where does this knowledge come from? Personal relationships with a supernatural entity are a very slippery slope and are, quite literally, indistinguishable from talking to oneself or hearing voices. One way or the other, it is either delusion or intellectual dishonesty at work.

YOU'RE A LIAR
STORIES CONSTRUED
WITH BIAS
RISING AND SHOUTING
AND PREACHING
QUESTIONING
SCEPTICAL SCRUTINY

YOU'RE A LIAR
I CAN SEE YOU'RE ENRAGED

HOW CAN A MATERIAL PERSON HAVE
KNOWLEDGE OF THE IMMATERIAL?
COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AND SMOKE SCREENS

YOU'RE ENTITLED TO YOUR OWN BELIEFS
YOU'RE NOT ENTITLED
(METAPHYSICAL CONTRADICTION)
TO YOUR OWN FACTS

ALL THAT IS THREATENING
ILLOGICALITY EXPLAINS AWAY

UNQUESTIONING THE TESTABLE
ONTOLOGICAL MUSINGS
ENGAGED IN SELF-DECEPTION
WHILE SCIENCE CRAVES HARD EVIDENCE

THE MANTLE OF RESPECT FOR FAITH
ENSNARED BY EGOCENTRIC GRACE
COMMITTED TO THESE STRANGE BELIEFS
DEFINING THEIR IDENTITIES

THE SAME OLD TIRED PLATITUDES
TO JUSTIFY A FLAWED WORLDVIEW
ELUSIVE AND MYSTERIOUS
STEADFAST IN THEIR REVERENCE

THE CREDULOUS HAVE LEFT THE PATH
TO LIVE AND BREATHE IN SERVITUDE
CONVEYING TRUTHS ABOUT THE WORLD DRIVEN BY EMOTION

THE DEPARTURE LOUNGE

The fact that all of us will one day die is, perhaps, something we go out of our way to try and ignore on a daily basis. Despite being surrounded by death, in seeing others both young and old perish, we often react as though death is something that happens to other people or, at best, that our own existential flame is far from being extinguished just yet. The structure of our day to day lives is such that we seldom entertain thoughts of our inevitable demise but, instead, conduct ourselves as though we will seemingly live long into the future. Stranger still is the ideal of immortality, something which is often promised to us by an array of various institutions, from religions that propose the existence of an afterlife (which just so happens to sound a little too much like what humans would want it to be), to the hollow assurances of contemporary materialist culture, in which longevity is implied by how much fame, influence, accomplishment and wealth one can accumulate. It seems, then, that many of us choose to live our lives in the grip of an illusion. This is completely understandable and can even work for a certain amount of time but what happens when we reach mature years?

For those of us who manage to live long enough to see friends and family die or watch our children grow old and start families of their own, it is at such a time when we may begin to see the futility of trying to ignore death's pervasive shadow. As our physical health and cognitive abilities slowly begin to wane, we are faced with a strong reminder of the inevitability of our expiration. Nursing homes are fast becoming the 'departure lounges' of our time, where people go (or are sent) and wait to die. In some cases, such individuals have become a burden for their families. In others, there is simply no one left to adequately take care of them and it is the best place for them to live out the remainder of their lives in relative comfort.

But while it is said that people can never truly die, as they will live on in the memories of others, the act of being dead is not something we will ever personally experience. Much like the state of being unborn, being dead is comparable to dreamless sleep, albeit eternal. Death, then, need not be a scary thought. What might invite anxiety and dread is how we die, whether it be swift and painless or, perhaps, alone in a retirement home surrounded by strangers, ignored by family members, struggling with ill health and deteriorating cognitive faculties, all the while reminiscing and reflecting on the nature of life. Yet, as uncomfortable and debilitating as old age can be, it is because of our mortality that our lives have any significance at all. Death is the single most important fact about us. Every single moment of sentience is enriched when we accept that it will never come again. And while our achievements, relationships and experiences will all one day be snuffed out, lost to the annals of deep time, this is all the more reason to enjoy each and every waking moment while it lasts. Of course, the responsibilities and mundane chores of our lives have the habit of getting in the way of our leisure time, but it is important to never lose sight of the fact that we are all slowly dying at this very moment and should capitalise on as many opportunities for making the most of our ephemeral existence.

DON'T WASTE ALL YOUR LIFE
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET OUT ALIVE
AS A VICTIM OF DELUSION
WE OFTEN USE OUR BELIEFS
TO FEEL A SENSE OF CONTROL

AND ONE BY ONE
THIS ENDEAVOUR ENDS
WE FALL BACK ON COLD ACCEPTANCE
EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONS WE ASK
ANXIETY TRUMPS DISTRACTION

WE ALL FACE THE END
OF OUR MORTAL LIVES
WE CAN'T SAVE OURSELVES
HIDE BEHIND A DECEPTIVE SMILE

THE UNIVERSAL FEATURE OF LIFE
DON'T WASTE ALL YOUR TIME
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET
A SECOND CHANCE
DYING ALONE WITH YOUR REGRETS
CONSTRUCTING OUR LIVES
TOWARDS ESCAPISM

WE ARE DYING ALREADY
BUT WE ACT AS IF WE'RE IMMORTAL

TERRESTRIAL DEPLETION

With the earth's current population estimated at roughly seven billion people, the number of humans now living on this planet has never been higher. More alarmingly is that the figure is expected to rise even further to approximately nine billion by the year 2050. Overpopulation has become a growing concern as we are beginning to realise that our consumption patterns of the earth's resources are accelerating at an unsustainable rate. Quite frankly, we are on a collision course with nature if we do not radically alter our current living habits. Although medical advances and the growth of agricultural productivity has brought life, happiness and prosperity to many individuals (as opposed to when stillbirths, disease, poverty and short life expectancy regularly wiped out vast pockets of humanity), our species has drastically multiplied in number to the point where we are in grave danger of sinking into a quagmire of irreversible economic and environmental disasters.

The earth's population needs to be stabilised immediately and our high levels of consumption must be rapidly reduced. Yet many of us are blinded to the world's predicament through a mix of ignorance, apathy or obstinate distraction. From climate change deniers to those who would keep women enslaved to subservient roles of compulsory reproduction with no access to contraception, it appears as though we are our own worst enemy when it comes to trying to enact a workable solution. Sadly, a lot of people would rather not have to give up their way of life and would choose to condemn future generations to a bleak and inhospitable existence in favour of their own selfish needs. Paradoxically, this tendency is in part because of our inherent nature.

Our species evolved under conditions in which being wasteful had no real consequence, given that our overall numbers were far too few to be of any threat to the planet. While the prevailing myth of the noble savage postulates that indigenous and pre-industrial civilisations lived in a state of ecological harmony with nature, it is a view which has been proven wrong. In actuality, early societies wreaked large scale damage on their environments, hunting numerous animals to the point of extinction and causing destruction to forests, fauna and flora. Just like today, the past exploitation of nature was often destructive but now that we have swelled in size, the collective devastation we engage in poses a huge risk to the longevity of our planet.

So what is the solution? Are we doomed? Certainly, the future does not look good so long as we continue doing things the way we have done for the last number of decades. Regrettably, humans are, by their very nature, short-term and instant gratification orientated because it's an evolutionary advantage that has played out over millions of years and was once quite valuable when we lived in different times. Even though we no longer reside in those ancient settings our minds have not quite caught up as evolutionary lag is said to be as long as 50,000 years. Instead we mortgage the future for instant gratification and, in doing so, endanger the entire welfare of the planet and many of its inhabitants. We are literally the only species capable of destroying ourselves (and other forms of life) by destroying the world in which we live.

EVERY DAY IN THIS LIFE
WASTEFUL CONSUMPTION
UNLIMITED POPULATIONS
NATURAL RESOURCES EXPLOITED

PLANETARY EXHAUSTION
NO MORE REFORMATIVE CAPACITIES
FUTURE GENERATIONS ENDANGERED
CAUSED BY FATAL MISCONCEPTIONS

AND WATCH THIS EARTH BE SET ON FIRE
FROM THE EXPLOITATION OF NATURE
INADVERTENT CONSEQUENCES

MANUFACTURING VICTIMS

The phenomenon known as False Memory Syndrome has become a leading example in highlighting the fallibility of human memory and how it is highly suggestible and can be altered by outside influences, with potential devastating consequences. Nowhere is this more evident than in the controversy surrounding the Recovered Memory Movement, which reached its zenith throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as tens of thousands of people (mostly Americans) became convinced they had repressed memories of childhood sexual abuse. This historical and hysterical epidemic, in which adults went into therapy with no memory of childhood trauma and came out believing that they had been sexually molested by family members or tortured in satanic cults, saw pre-school teachers, fathers, brothers, uncles and even mothers being falsely accused. Communities and families were devastated and hundreds of innocents were sent to jail. Several remain imprisoned today. But how could a person come to believe that they were sexually abused in childhood if they never had any memories of it before entering therapy?

The answer lies in the unfalsifiable (and unscientific) theory that the mind has the ability to defend itself from overwhelming events by 'repressing' certain experiences and emotions from conscious awareness. Repression is not the same as ordinary forgetting but is said to be the active banishment of a traumatic event or series of traumas into the unconscious. These memories are then, typically, recovered in therapy when the person is exposed to different techniques such as suggestive questioning, guided visualisation, age regression, hypnosis, art therapy, dream analysis, and group therapy. However, while there are a number of caring and talented counsellors, healthcare professionals and psychologists who do tremendous work in helping those who have been affected by sexual abuse, there are a myriad of individuals who have managed to line their pockets by scavenging on this human misery, creating victims out of people who were never abused.

During the epoch of the Recovered Memory Movement, many therapists insisted that the current pain of their clients was so severe that only repressed memories of traumatic abuse could explain it. Authors and other self-appointed authorities publicly spoke out, propagating the concept of repressed memory and, in doing so, collectively fuelled a media-induced hysteria, ensnaring many vulnerable people looking for answers. Many therapists managed to 'implant' false memories in the minds of suggestible clients, making therapeutic lifers out of them and, in a lot of cases, ripping their families apart. Overall, the damage done was catastrophic. Thankfully, many ex-clients who later deemed their recovered memories as being false brought their therapists to court on charges of malpractice and won.

What the whole recovered memory phenomenon demonstrates is how good intentions can go astray when they're ruled by emotion, credulity, and even greed, rather than by reason. Many genuine victims of abuse suffer for years with the dark secret of their tortured past. Their memories are not in dispute. Rather, it is the memories referred to as 'repressed' which raise eyebrows; memories which did not exist until someone deliberately went looking for them.

I CAN'T SEE A WAY
NO PERCEPTION
INTO YOUR DIRECT PAST
SO I CONSTRUCT THEORIES
THAT YOU DON'T QUESTION
SUFFER INJUSTICE
I'LL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR LIES

AVOID CONFRONTATION WITH SCEPTICAL DISBELIEF
TURN AROUND AND FACE THE UNKNOWN
SEARCH WITHIN YOUR DREAMS

CREATING THE VICTIM
FALSE MEMORIES OF TRAUMA

HOW CAN WE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED
WITHOUT CORROBORATION?
RECOVERED MEMORIES
THERE ARE INCENTIVES
FAILURES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS IN LIFE
BECOME BETTER EXPLAINED

AGGRESSIVE THERAPEUTIC TECHNIQUES
EXPERIENCE IS ALTERED
AS IT'S HAULED OUT OF MEMORY

CREATING THE VICTIM
FALSE MEMORIES OF TRAUMA

THE COROLLARIES OF DOUBT

Many people these days appear to practice their religion in their own way. While some hold fast to the tenets of their faith, regularly attending public sessions of worship and engaging in the various rituals and traditions, others pick and choose which parts they like, what they're willing to adhere to, and lead their lives accordingly. But for some, the act of selecting which parts of doctrine to follow and which parts to ignore often leads them to question the validity of the entire belief system. While such people may not always lose faith in the possibility of there being a supernatural entity, they may certainly come to see organised religion as being man-made and littered with glaring contradictions which they can no longer ignore.

However, losing one's religion can often involve losing one's family, friends and community. Of course, this depends on the individual's particular environment but the risk of 'coming out' as a non-believer can be met with anything from mutual support or benign indifference, to misunderstanding, harsh disapproval, estrangement, ostracism and, in extreme cases, repercussions of a much more sinister nature (the penalty for apostasy in countries which subscribe to fundamentalist religiosity can include imprisonment, severe beatings and even execution). All of these risks pose a very real threat to those who would make their lack of belief known to others and, as such, many 'closet' atheists and agnostics feel trapped, having to hide who they truly are and feeling unable to opt-out of participating in various religious communal activities and traditions for fear of upsetting or angering others.

One unique group of closet non-believers is that of certain clergy members; the very people who function as spiritual leaders for many and who stand up in front of their parishioners each and every week to preach the gospel. Recently, there have been numerous confidential testimonies from clergy members who have secretly abandoned their faith but feel they have nowhere to turn. There are few careers that are jeopardised by such a change in worldview and while one might be tempted to suggest such individuals abandon their posts and look for a new direction in life, searching for employment elsewhere after spending, in some cases, decades devoted to a life of theological servitude is easier said than done. Many clergy members, of religions which allow them to have families, feel completely stuck as they do not want to hurt their loved ones.

Financially speaking, and especially for those with families, the main worry is that because they have missed out on opportunities to learn new skills, given that the only work experience they have has been centred on religious devotion, means their future job prospects are severely limited. Lastly, it can take tremendous courage for someone to publicly admit to others that they've, quite possibly, wasted decades of their life in servitude to something they now think is based on wishful thinking. While some may indeed gain a sense of personal freedom, no longer having to worry about salvation and concepts such as hell and eternal punishment, there is still the matter of how other people in their lives are going to react.

NO LONGER FEARING
ETERNAL HELL OR TORMENT
LIKE A WEIGHT BEING LIFTED
FREE FROM A LIFE OF DEVOTION

I NO LONGER BELIEVE
IN THE TEACHINGS OF RELIGION
BUT NOW I'M GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS
BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT
THE COROLLARIES OF DOUBT

I LOST MY FAITH
I MADE A MISTAKE

EVERY WEEK I STRUGGLE
WITH THE FACT THAT I'M LIVING A LIE
A SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
IS THIS CHARADE SUSTAINABLE?

I FEAR MISUNDERSTANDING
AND OUTRIGHT REJECTION
I'M AFRAID TO COME OUT
EVERY WEEK I FEEL LIKE A TOTAL FRAUD

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT
THE COROLLARIES OF DOUBT

WHO AM I NOW?
A SENSE OF GRIEF
I'VE FOUND A WAY
OUT OF THIS BELIEF

CHOSEN

PAUL SHIELDS – VOCALS / GUITARS / BASS
DAVID MCCANN – DRUMS / PERCUSSION

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