

LOVE AMONGST RUIN

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Stuttgart Universum

Forget Rocky, Born On The Fourth Of July or the Robbie Williams comeback; there's a far more down-to-earth tale of triumph by perseverance right here in **LOVE AMONGST RUIN**.

On the 21st September, 2007 Steve Hewitt parted ways with Placebo, the band of which he'd been the drummer, co-songwriter and rock'n'roll lifeblood since 1996.

After two and a half years spent channelling his energy into a very personal album he now returns as the rejuvenated frontman of Love Amongst Ruin, a multi-faceted hard rock band with the crunch of a stone age queen, the crossover appeal of a parkful of linkins and the melodicism of the hardest fighter of foos. Drop in twists of New Order/Depeche Mode electro-twangle, Can/Kasabian motorika, Cure atmospherics and hardcore Metallica riffage and you've got a bounce-back of potentially Gary Barlow proportions on your hands.

Steve's resurgence was inevitable: having served time at the stool of such diverse acts as The Boo Radleys, grit-rockers Breed, baggy chart stars K-Klass and Placebo – with whom he tasted huge global success, sharing the journey from post-Britpop indie hype band to multi-million selling international superstars – the recording studio is Hewitt's natural habitat. And there he returned, holing up in his home studio for three months at the end of 2007 with ex-Lamb bassist and fellow Northwich boy Jon Thorn, jamming on forty or so ideas on drums and upright bass. Though many of their demos were rooted in grooves and rock, the first song to be completed was 'Love Song', Steve's defiantly romantic piano paean that ends LAR's debut album.

"That was my first attempt at writing and singing and doing the whole thing," Steve explains. "It was for my wife. I finished it, spent two days pondering it over and on the third day, late in the evening, I set up the machine and the headphones, and said 'go upstairs and listen to that track'. I had to sit downstairs, I couldn't be in the same room as her because I was petrified she'd go 'it's shit!'. But she came down crying, which I took as a good sign."

Recruiting his brother Nick on guitar and Julian Cope associate Donald Ross Skinner as co-producer and guitarist, **LOVE AMONGST RUIN** decamped to Bath Moles studio for two four-week recording sessions over the summer of 2008 which Steve found "very exhilarating, I really enjoyed it. I dealt with it really well. I had to make sure it was something I could live with afterwards. I was trying to be true to myself."

Was he worried about taking up singing duties? "It's another hurdle. As soon as I got in the vocal booth at Moles, then I realised there was gonna be a point I was gonna have to get onstage and do this. I was nervous then!"

The record they emerged with was a succinct yet wide-reaching beast. 'Love Song' and its harmonious cello brethren 'Bring Me Down (You Don't)' ("a tip of the hat to Can's 'Bel Air'") find counterpoint in the distorted vocals and brutal rock pummel of 'Running' or 'Blood & Earth' and the cinematic Robert Smith shimmerscapes of 'Away From Me' and 'Heaven & Hell'. Elsewhere 'Truth' sounds like Nine Inch Nails covering Sigur Ros, the funk-punk 'Home' could've dropped, snarling and snivelling, off Kasabian's 'West Ryder Pauper Asylum' and the first two singles 'So Sad (Fade)' and 'Alone' are worthy of QOTSA and New Order respectively. As rock'n'roll all-rounders go, this is a veritable Flintoff of an album. "It was always going to be a pop/rock record but it was always open to see whatever other influences would come along. All the vocals are very different on the record, there's lots of different textures and flavours and styles. I'm finding myself at the moment. The first things I've written are out on that record and I think it's quite brave. For a debut album it's surprisingly commercially viable and a great platform to other things. It's a great pop/rock record. I've always been a pop tart."

Placebo fans may well find Steve's lyrics of interest; these songs are drenched in bitterness, bile and betrayal, but nonetheless underpinned with determination, self-belief, hope. Friends may be inconstant, but tough times will be overcome. "It's a bunch of break-up songs. I used this ejection from Placebo for the motivation of the lyrics. Not necessarily completely directed at Brian (Molko) and Stef (Olsdal) but at the same time it's hard not to combine that. 'So Sad' is losing a mate which you thought was a mate. With 'Alone' I managed to get the word 'girl' in there right at the end, but it's a break-up song. "It's cathartic definitely, it needed to be done like that. It's been a tough journey these last two years but doing this record and these lyrics definitely got it out of me and I'm really pleased about that."

With a minor Oasis of sibling rivalry ousting Nick from the post-studio line-up, **LOVE AMONGST RUIN** made their debut live outing at The Barfly on 11th May backed with Bath musos Steve Hove on lead guitar, Laurie Ross on cello, key's and percussion and Magnus Lunden on bass.

Steve feels confident he can put the ghosts of Placebo behind him and forge on into a fresher, brighter stage of his life. "I'm happy finding my own road," Steve grins with his trademark joviality. "I've got some great people around me, I've hand-picked some really cool talented people for the band, there's a great vibe, I'm enjoying being in a band and enjoying music again. It feels really fresh and full of energy."

Triumph over adversity? Success snatched from the jaws of defeat? We're only at scene one and there's a movie already begging to be made about Love Amongst Ruin.

Biography written by Mark Beaumont
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www.loveamongstruin.com

Music Circus Concertbüro – Charlottenplatz 17 – 70173 Stuttgart – www.musiccircus.de

Pressekontakt: Tel. 0711 / 62008025 – eMail presse@musiccircus.de