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**KASABIAN**

Bowie, Prince, George Michael, Brexit, Trump… by most markers, 2016 wasn’t a vintage year. Unless you were Serge Pizzorno, that is.

“I was just feeling good about everything,” recalls Kasabian’s guitarist/songwriter/all-round sonic shaman. “I got married, Leicester City won the league and I'd written my best record yet!”.

Serge has every right to be upbeat. Kasabian’s sixth album is genuinely the best selection of tunes they’ve put out since they first erupted into the public conscious back in 2004.

A straight flush of knock out tune after knock out tune, it could almost be a greatest hits. In fact, when the day comes to pick an all-time Kasabian starting line-up, every one of these songs is going to be jossling Club Foot, elbowing Fire out the way and tugging on Empire’s shirt for a deserved place in the team.

Its all-killer make up was no accident either.

“I decided to give myself six weeks to write an album like they used to do back in the day and that became really inspiring” Serge recalls. “I was like ‘Right, I’m ready to go into the studio and make a guitar album with loads of really good songs on it.’ Which sounds so basic, but literally that was it. I made sure there was no fat on anything, it was going to be classic songs, no self-indulgence, nothing was going on there that shouldn’t. I’d heard Berry Gordy had said if you’ve not got them in the first four bars then you’re finished, so I went in with this old school attitude of song-writing.”

Having spent day after day sat with his guitar listening to classic songs from Blondie and The Beatles to Nirvana and The Stooges, picking them apart and distilling the alchemy that made them stand the test of time, Serge set about crafting his own. Each morning he’d get up, walk out to his Aladdin’s cave-like studio The Sergery, weave his way past the lines of guitars, stacks of vintage synthesizers, retro gizmos and the enormous, signed picture of Leicester City defender Steve Walsh and create Kasabian’s entries for the great rock and roll songbook.

“There was an ambition to save guitar music from wherever the hell it’s going. We’re trying to save it from being written off as just old music. We wanted to make a very positive album full of hope with guitars to remind people that it doesn’t have to sound like some old-fashioned bullshit next to whatever’s coming out, that it’s still relevant,” he states. “That was the plan, and that’s what we’ve made.”

**P.T.O**

Like Beastie Boys slam dancing into French electro thumpers Justice, spilling their pint and then taking it outside, Ill Ray (The King) kicks the doors of For Crying Out Loud open with grandstanding intent.  A riotous eruption that takes the self-aggrandisement of the best hip hop diss tracks and delivers it with a fistful of Leicester-bred piss-taking.

“I love that hip hop arrogance. I don’t think there’s any other band that goes out like an MC telling everyone how much better they are than everyone else,” says Serge. “It’s playful and you’re in on the joke. Of course you don’t fucking really think that, if you really thought that you’d be a dick, but it’s great to say and it’s funny.”

Flick through any interview with Serge or Tom Meighan from the past ten years and their give-a-fuck sense of humour and delight in the absurd is plain to see. Perhaps more so than on any other Kasabian record, it’s all over For Crying Out Loud.

Take the opening (punch) line in Wasted’s Love-like, alluring mystique - “Summer is here, so I am told... but you won’t catch me in my shorts” - or the fact that the galloping Come Back Kid transposes a Peckinpah-esque standoff into a Leicester Poundshop. I mean, you probably won’t get Drake telling a rival he “smells like hotel soap”.

“I had way more fun with the lyrics on this one and I was way more honest as well,” he chuckles. “It’s me on the page - shit I hear, shit I’ve talked, the language I use.”

The New York punk funk fun of You’re In Love With A Psycho is a case in point. Its ludicrously catchy slink detailing sharing chips outside the bargain booze shop after a night out with someone you can’t get enough of, but who always turns out to be a bit of a handful after a few.

“It’s not literal, it’s not like a knife scene in the shower. It’s more like someone telling you a story about a past relationship and they go, ‘You know what mate, she was mental…’” he laughs. “It’s got one of those hooks, the groove is just irresistible.”

Whereas before he might have delighted in taking a relatively straightforward tune and sticking an extended Krautrock freakout or glitching techno breakdown in the middle, this time around Serge made a point to restrain himself and instead fills any spare nook or cranny with a perfectly executed middle eight, a deft countermelody or yet another hands-in-the-air chorus.

“I’d always go, ‘Here’s a really pop tune and then there’s this bit that’s in another fucking realm,” he notes. “But I thought, ‘No, I’m not going to do that this time,’. It was really hard!”

**P.T.O**

Of course, rules are there to be broken too, so Serge can also treat himself to an extended 12” -style workout on Are You Looking For Some Action’s party tune vibe. Whisking its one nation under a groove off down a rabbit hole of ESG-inspired basslines, piano house and squealing Roxy Music saxophones. Otherwise though, he’s resolutely kept to the mission statement.

The spangled gonzo glam of Good Fight is such an unadulterated melodic pop wallop you can imagine Marc Bolan pouting his way through it on an old episode of Top Of The Pops. Similarly, a late edition to the album making process Bless This Acid House was written as an antidote to the overwhelmingly negative feelings Serge had fortunately managed to sidestep.  “I thought the world was caving in, it’s a mad time you know,” he notes, “but I thought that everybody had had their say, so that tune is just pure positive energy.”

It’s an exhilarating endorphin rush that neatly cues up Put Your Life On It, a song Tom Meighan – not unreasonably – declares to be “as good as Let It Be.” Building from a pared-back Plastic Ono Band stomp into a planet-sized love-bombing of a singalong. Or, if you will, a song that was built for crying out loud.

“It was always the thing that my dad and grandma would say before giving you a clip round the ear, but when I wrote it down it had this double meaning,” Serge points out. “It’s funny that something you heard as a kid could explain what this music is: it’s music for singing your fucking heart out to.”

Sounds exactly like what 2017 needs.