FINK – *HARD BELIEVER*

*Hard Believer* is the new studio album by FINK: Fin Greenall on vocals/guitar, alongside bandmates Tim Thornton on drums/guitar, and Guy Whittaker on bass. It will be their first release on the R’COUP’D imprint, a label newly created by Greenall with the backing of the Ninja Tune team. Urban, bluesy, and alive, *Hard Believer* is inspired by life’s twists and turns, channelling hard-won triumphs and bittersweet experiences. It is a masterful collection of songs from an artist at the peak of his creative powers.

“We wanted to go deeper this time, and be more ambitious with the music,” Fin explains, “to move the sound forward without losing touch of where we’re from.” Recorded in seventeen days at Hollywood’s legendary Sound Factory studios, *Hard Believer* is shot through with rawness and controlled aggression; an album replete with calm beginnings seguing into powerfully hypnotic loops and climactic finales. “It’s performance-oriented rather than track-oriented,” Fin says. “We recorded a lot of the vocals at the same time as the acoustic guitars so they aren’t always perfectly synchronised. But we like that honesty in our recordings.”

With Thornton and Whittaker now as trusted co-writers, work on the new songs began after the *Perfect Darkness*/*Wheels* tour finished in India in late 2012, continuing on subsequent trips to LA (where Greenall also wrote tracks for the William H Macy movie *Rudderless,* and with John Legend for the *12 Years a Slave* soundtrack album). After a year of intensive writing sessions in Amsterdam, Brighton and London, the band journeyed to California to reunite with producer Billy Bush (Garbage, Beck, Foster the People). Other contributors to the album include Dutch jazz pianist Ruben Hein, with strings courtesy of Matt Kelly and Andrew Phillips.

The new album presents ten brand new songs, including the mighty “Shakespeare”, a tale of young love gone tragically sour as the mood darkens from acoustic to guttural rock; the spiky yet delicate “Looking Too Closely”, riding an irresistible piano-and-guitar groove; “Green and the Blue”, on which a vulnerable Greenall meditates on the constants in life that see you through tough times; “Two Days Later”, a deeply personal lament and one of only two songs that start and remain down-tempo; and the breathtaking “Pilgrim”, the latest collaboration with songwriter Blair Mackichan, co-writer of “This Is The Thing” from Fink’s 2007 *Distance and Time*, and “Honesty” from 2011’s *Perfect Darkness*.

*Hard Believer* continues the bold expansion of folk’s parameters begun by its predecessor, *Perfect Darkness*: “A delight… you don’t want it to end,” glowed a *Guardian* review, and at times on the epic 18-month tour that followed, it felt as if it never would. Such was the global popularity of the album that it also spawned not one, but two live records: 2012’s *Wheels Turn Beneath My Feet,* and 2013’s *Fink Meets the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra*, which repurposed the songs as rolling mini-symphonies with one of the greatest symphony orchestras in the world. The campaign concluded with the release of final single “Warm Shadow,” accompanied by a cover of the song from Justin Vernon and Colin Stetson of Bon Iver.

Greenall has always been a guitarist; self-taught at a young age, it was a quiet and personal gift he kept largely to himself. He began creating trip-hop music in college, leading to his first purely electronic album *Fresh Produce,* released on Ninja Tune’s N-Tone label in 2000. It was six “long-assed” and “brutal” years of DJing before his next record, 2006’s *Biscuits for Breakfast*, unveiled the radical new singer-songwriter direction. Greenall had initially envisaged only a partial transition from the world of electronica, but it was Ninja Tune who insisted he either commit fully to the shift from behind the decks, or not at all. “Their encouragement helped me make one of the most important decisions of my career,” he admits.

Another big influence on the transition was producing and co-writing tracks for others from his basement studio; among them the actor Michael Pitt, and a teenage Amy Winehouse. “She blew my mind,” Greenall says. “At the time, if you didn’t look like one of Girls Aloud it was game over. Amy reminded us that it’s what you sound like and have to say, that counts.” One of their collaborations, “Half Time”, produced by Salaam Remi, can be heard on her posthumous collection *Lioness: Hidden Treasures.*

Much like Fink albums of the past, *Hard Believer* covers wide ground. Musically it explores folk, electronica, blues, and rock. But it’s the songwriting that really propels Fink into a new space: a serious evolution that should see him regarded as one of the UK’s great modern-day songwriters. “The term ‘Hard Believer’ comes from deep-south Americana; it means somebody who is difficult to persuade, who requires proof.” In truth, all anyone has to do here is listen to the powerful collection of songs on *Hard Believer*. The belief will surely follow.

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