**SEAN ROWE**

"We are the elders of our minds," sings **Sean Rowe** on "Gas Station Rose," the track that ushers in his fourth album, ***New Lore***, with plaintive plucks of guitar and steady drips of piano that fall in like rain. It's a sparse and beautiful moment, anchored by **Rowe**'s unparalleled voice - so full of gravely soul, aged and edged by years on the road, as a father and husband, as a creative force always looking for the next rhyme. And, so integral to the man that he is, one that is constantly absorbing nature. It wasn't the easiest journey to get to the ten vulnerable songs that comprise ***New Lore*** (out April 7th care of Anti-) – it took a label change, a trip to Memphis and some support from unexpected places – but what resulted is a roadmap for a gentle heart in modern times, in a world where the best oracle isn’t within a computer, but within ourselves.

Though **Rowe** has often made his hometown of Troy, New York and its surrounding areas his creative base, ***New Lore*** brought a new environment, and a new producer. Appropriate to his love of folk-blues legends like Howlin' Wolf, he ventured to Sam Phillips Recording studio in Memphis to work with Matt Ross-Spang (Jason Isbell, Margo Price). They tapped into the history of the legendary space to hone a sound that is at once rich and stark, putting **Rowe**'s deep and dynamic rage at the forefront. Because if high notes can shatter windows, **Rowe**'s low and guttural ones can meld sand into glass.

"I was looking for a specific sound and part of that was the rawness, the element of risk that Sam Phillips took with his artists," Rowe says. "Since I was a kid I was really drawn to that music. I wasn't really listening to music my peers were: I was really into old soul music, and music coming out of Memphis. It's been in my work maybe in more subtle ways than now, but it's always been in there."

The songs on *New Lore* were often built to let **Rowe**'s voice come through in its most stirring capacity: from the wrenching ode to parenthood "I'll Follow Your Trail" to the naturalistic "The Very First Snow," instrumentals are layered carefully and artfully over the vocals, finding footing in **Rowe**'s sly and idiosyncratic guitar style. Much of what came was a result of **Rowe** going into the studio with a more relaxed approach – no preproduction was done, no demos finished. **Rowe** and Ross-Spang embraced an organic style that is so representative of how the singer-songwriter leads his life, and that is one of always fighting to flow gently with the earth, not against it.

"We were looking for perfect imperfection," **Rowe** says. "If we fucked up and it was cool, then I wanted that in there. You let it happen and you don't polish it too much."

***New Lore***also ushered in a career shift – this time, after several years on Anti-, Rowe launched his own label, Three Rivers Records, and will release his LP as a collaboration with the Anti- family. He also embraced a new way of funding his work, using a wildly successful Kickstarter campaign to make the Memphis dreams a reality, and embarked on a series of house shows to reconnect with his fans at the most basic, intimate level.

"I kept asking myself, 'What would be cool? What would be something different?,'" **Rowe** says. "That's what led me to house shows, and to the Kickstarter and to just take chances. Those chances are what led me to early rock and roll in the first place – that's all about taking chances. I had no idea what to expect, but I could tell as it got more momentum that people really wanted to see it happen."

**Rowe** also found himself on another unexpected wave – his unreleased song "To Leave Something Behind" found life in Ben Affleck's film *The Accountant*, exposing the mystique of his music to an even wider audience. Written five years ago in London, it echoes some of the themes that half a decade later surfaced again in ***New Lore***: the things in life we pass down to our children, the ideas we learn from our elders, the shadows we leave behind when we are gone. The first single, "Gas Station Rose," is about two people trying to navigate that together. "That's the conflict to the story," **Rowe** says. "They want to stick it out, but they know it's incredibly hard to keep shit together. Conflict makes for a great song."

So does opening yourself up to vulnerability: ***New Lore*** is formed from that tenderness, exposed like an open wound but one asking for healing, not to linger in pain. Like "Promise of You," with a gospel swing inspired by Ketty Lester's classic "Love Letters" and the piano-driven "I Can't Make a Living From Holding You," **Rowe** speaks to the reality of loving and leaving, a constant dilemma for a man who builds half of himself on tour playing to strangers and half of himself tucking his children in at night. Home is process, not a destination, and ***New Lore*** is a roadmap there – perfectly imperfect, raw and real.

"My music isn’t glossy or shiny," **Rowe** says. "But it's true."