

Teenage Fanclub Here

1. I'm In Love
2. Thin Air
3. Hold On
4. The Darkest Part Of The Night
5. I Have Nothing More To Say
6. I Was Beautiful When I Was Alive
7. The First Sight
8. Live In The Moment
9. Steady State
10. It's A Sign
11. With You
12. Connected To Life

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I'm not selling out my imagination, I'm a citizen of the human nation.

—"I Was Beautiful When I Was Alive," *Here*

Six years used to be a lifetime in rock 'n' roll. Kids driven by the urgency of youth form bonds, plug in, play gigs, find a label. Acclaim, exhaustion, over and over.

Teenage Fanclub's early years were propelled by that kind of frantic energy (thankfully without the flameout). As outliers of the sound of young Scotland's second wave, they released five albums in their first six years together. The foundations of their national-treasure status were already laid.

Inevitably, as the years go on, time seems to stretch and things slow down. The tenth Teenage Fanclub LP—*Here*—arrives six years after the release of 2010's hugely acclaimed *Shadows* (described by Uncut as "the sound of a great group ageing gracefully"). One has to ask: what took them so long?

Gerard Love: "I find that as you get older, everything expands. When you start out, the nucleus of the band is so tightly bound, you're living in each other's pockets. Later on, you move away from each other and then everything around you—distance and time—just expands. Life gets in the way."

Raymond McGinley: "It does actually feel like ages between records. Once you're a certain way in, the way it works in my experience is once you're taking a long time making it, you're going to take a long time to get back out again."

Norman Blake: "Shadows came after a five-year gap; this one is coming after a six-year gap. Getting back together to work, even after all these years, does feel a lot like coming home. Thinking about it now, we really should get together a bit more often."

Not for one second is *Here* the sound of procrastination or headscratching. It's the effortless work of a band entirely confident in their own craft—the consolidation of nearly three decades of peerless songwriting and almost telepathic musicianship. Recorded with the band's soundman David Henderson alongside regular drummer Francis Macdonald and keyboard player Dave McGowan in three distinctly different environments (initially at Vega in rural Provence, then at Raymond's home in Glasgow before mixing at Clouds Hill in the industrial heart of Hamburg), it's a record that embraces maturity and experience and hugs them close.

Raymond: "We've been working together for a long time; we've probably used most of the studios in the UK over the years. We're conscious of not repeating experiences that we've had before. For us, it's about trying to get something new out of each place we go. If you're always trying to make something original, it makes sense to go on a journey—a physical one—to try to make the record feel different."

As ever, song-wise the Fanclub present a textbook representation of democracy in action, the record offering four each by Blake, Love, and McGinley. From the almighty chime of opener "I'm In Love" ("We will fade into history, I'm in love with you love ... And I like your trajectory, I'm in love with you love") through the ecstatic soul-search



of "The First Sight" ("Will I ever get to see the first sight of a heart that's true?") and the paean to unerring friendship "With You" ("I will hide with you from sadness, and bad philosophy / I will laugh with you at madness, and learned stupidity"), *Here* is a collection of twelve songs about the only things that truly matter: life and love.

Raymond: "Lyrically, I think it's a coincidence that the songs hit on similar themes. We all write individually; there's no formal discussion about what we're writing. I always like to think anything's possible when we make a new record, but because of who we are and how we work, there's always going to be a strong continuity."

Norman: "Possibly the album seems like it's all about life because we're all surprised that we're still here. Gerry's not quite 50; both myself and Raymond are now. You do start to focus on mortality a bit more as you get older."

Gerard: "I think in your twenties and thirties, you fear middle age; you fear becoming older. Maybe you can fight it and try to stay as an eternal teenager. I like to think that we play to our strengths, to our understanding of life. Folk music, blues—it's not necessarily made by young people. A lot of music I find myself drawn to is made by people over 40 years old. It might not be on the cover of NME, but it can still deliver a truth."

As is befitting of a record that took its time to arrive, *Here* uses reflective space to dazzling effect. "Steady State," with its gorgeous ebb and flow, has echoes of The Notorious Byrd Brothers' astral jangle, while "I Was Beautiful When I Was Alive" unexpectedly curves off from dreamlike beginnings into a semi-acoustic/motorik outro, sonically replacing the steady beat of the German autobahn with the vast open skies of the Pacific Coast Highway.

Raymond: "When we're recording, we operate on a basis of 'whatever anyone wants to do, that's what we're doing.' We always have, really. With "I Was Beautiful...", we just went off—the original backing track just kept going for ten, twenty minutes or something. It just felt so good to play."

Norman: "I love that track. I think we invented our own genre for it—Kraut-folk-rock!"

Here, then, to that place where Teenage Fanclub are still inventing genres and still writing perfect songs about life in that human nation. Hope they get back to us a bit quicker next time.

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