

INTERPOL

This Mirror Weighs a Ton

For a band that has spent more than two decades refining a language of restraint, atmosphere and tension, there is something quietly disorienting about the moment that opens Interpol's *This Mirror Weighs a Ton*. Not because it breaks from what they are, but because it refracts it — bending familiar shapes into something slightly alien, as if seen through a different kind of light.

Appropriately, the album begins with its title song, the name of which arrived almost before its meaning. A phrase unearthed, as Paul Banks describes it, from the subconscious terrain where melody and language blur together. The song itself follows a similar logic. It builds from a skeletal progression into something vast and textural, with warped bass, a wordless female voice and a sense of motion that feels tidal. It is recognizably Interpol, but also not entirely legible in the way their music has often been. It sets a tone not of reinvention, but of expansion — and of a band perfectly willing to let its instincts lead it somewhere unfamiliar.

That willingness has always been rooted in the creative relationship between Banks, Daniel Kessler and Sam Fogarino, a partnership that now approaches three decades. It is a collaboration defined by intuitive alignment and minimal overt dialogue. Kessler writes in isolation—on a guitar he's had since he was a teenager, in the quiet of his home while watching old movies early in the morning—assembling songs that arrive nearly complete. Banks, in turn, responds to them, finding pathways through melody and language that feel both inevitable and surprising.

It is, as he puts it, a “peanut butter and jelly” dynamic: distinct elements that only fully make sense in combination. What is striking, this far into their career, is not just that the chemistry remains intact, but that it continues to generate momentum. “The well has never been dry,” Kessler says. This relationship — tempered by time and geographical distance, shaped by shared experience, but still fundamentally intact — is what allows the band to continue evolving without losing its identity.

A moment early in the process of the album's making captures something of this duality — of looking backward and forward at once. In April 2024, Interpol played the largest show of their career in Mexico City, performing for more than 200,000 people at the Zócalo. It was, by any measure, a peak: a celebration of the band's history and the deep connection they have built with an audience over time.

And yet, even then, the focus was on the future. In the days leading up to the show, the band had begun working with Grammy- and Oscar-winning producer Andrew Wyatt (ROSALÍA, Charli xcx) at his Lower East Side studio in New York — the first time Interpol had made a record in their original home base in many years. It was, in its own quiet way, a return to where the band first took shape, even as the music itself pushed toward unfamiliar territory. Kessler recalls walking through Mexico City listening to those recordings, deeply appreciative of the milestone as well as the pull of what was coming next.

That sense of forward motion defines *This Mirror Weighs a Ton*. Working with Wyatt — whose background spans pop, orchestration and experimental sound design and who'd been friends with Kessler and Banks for years — introduced vibrant new textures into Interpol's world. Synthesizers, strings, percussion: elements that had been peripheral or absent in the past are now integrated into the fabric of the songs. There are exotic sonics and electronics at the beginning of "Wounded Soldier," ecstatic piano layers in "Ever the Actor" and even a full-on woodwind flourish at the end of "Bird and the Serpent." But nothing feels imposed. The additions expand the palette, but their greater value is in revealing colors that were already latent within it.

"I wondered what it would be like to keep the parts perfectly legible, because everyone in that band writes such great parts. And to add some different spatial dimensions to it." Wyatt says. "It was something almost a little bit more like chamber music — the musical ideas bear scrutiny without needing the sonic treatment of it to carry all the weight. It was also nice to add a trick or two I picked up over a couple decades of making pop records."

"I was right next to Andrew when he started doing these incredible things with the sound design, and it was just so exciting," Kessler says of the title song. "I remember thinking, I don't have context for what kind of music this is — these big crashes happening before Paul even had a vocal. Logic would have said maybe this is an instrumental. Then Paul just got up, went into the back room and started singing those melodies — and suddenly it was clearly not going to be."

Many of the album's key moments emerged from this interplay between structure and spontaneity. "So Rides the Reindeer" began almost accidentally — an acoustic guitar picked up in Wyatt's basement studio, a drum pattern programmed by Wyatt in passing, a riff that reshaped the song's identity entirely. It became the first Interpol song built around acoustic guitar, its strange, burbling atmosphere offset by a chorus that comes off unexpectedly open, almost hopeful. The title track itself grew from a fragment of that same progression, transformed through collective improvisation into something entirely different.

Elsewhere, the material moves fluidly between familiarity and departure. "See Out Loud" carries the DNA of the band's earliest work—sharp, propulsive, direct—but complicates it with layered vocals and shifting perspectives, including a rare lead turn at the mic from Kessler. "Wings on Fire" leans into the band's classic interplay of bass and guitar, while "Wake Up" introduces a kinetic, almost playful energy, its rhythm propelled by percussion (bongo drums, to be precise...) that would have once felt out of place. The album's deepest vibe, "Wounded Soldier" builds toward an irresistible groove that recalls a distant lineage of rock music, only to submerge it within a broader, more ambiguous sonic landscape.

"The brilliance of that outro riff is how simple it is — you could just keep playing it forever," Banks says. "To write something so minimal but still so captivating is a real high point for Daniel. I used to call it the *Tron* riff. It felt like those bikes moving through that landscape with neon light trailing behind them."

At the center of it all is Banks' voice, which moves with unusual, remarkable fluidity across the record. Sometimes it is immediate and declarative; at others, it recedes, fragmenting into different registers and viewpoints. He describes his approach as increasingly subconscious — melody comes first, often in the form of nonsensical syllables that already contain the shape of what needs to be said. The task is then to uncover it without disrupting its natural form.

The album's title resulted from this process, and in many ways encapsulates its thematic core. "This mirror weighs a ton" is, on its surface, a simple phrase. But its resonance expands the more it is considered. It speaks to the burden of self-reflection — the difficulty of confronting one's own inner life with honesty. "When Paul sang that vocal, it hit me so hard," Kessler admits. "I can still feel it. He can go to places emotionally that other people just can't. There's nothing inauthentic about it."

The artwork, created by artist Addie Wagenknecht and drawn from a piece now held in the Whitney Museum's permanent collection, evokes the LP's recurring themes of identity, distortion and perception. That weight is present in songs like "Sudden," a sparse but gripping piano-driven closer that traces the slow accumulation of unspoken truths within a relationship. What appears abrupt from the outside is revealed, from within, as something long in the making.

That sense of accumulated pressure — of things carried quietly until they surface — extends beyond the personal. While Interpol has rarely engaged directly with overtly political themes, there is an undercurrent here that reflects the broader psychological climate of the present moment. Banks describes an increasing fascination with denial, with the narratives people construct to navigate reality. These concerns, once confined to the realm of individual experience, now intersect with a wider social context that feels increasingly unstable. The result is not a shift in Interpol's subject matter so much as an expansion of its implications.

And yet, for all its weight, the album does not feel heavy in a conventional sense. There is a lightness in the way the songs move, a sense of curiosity that offsets the gravity of their themes. Simultaneously muscular and precise, the rhythmic architecture Fogarino has brought to all Interpol albums remains as essential as ever here, while longtime touring bassist Brad Truax played and wrote on an Interpol album for the first time, further expanding the music's internal cohesion. And with Wyatt, they have found a collaborator capable of uniquely amplifying that dynamic without overwhelming it.

There is a line in "This Mirror Weighs a Ton" about "the maniac in your head" that lingers beneath the surface. It suggests something restless, unresolved, perhaps even necessary. For Interpol, that restlessness has always been the thing that prevents the music from settling into certainty. It is what keeps the mirror heavy, and what makes it still worth carrying.