

SPINDLE MAGAZINE

INTERVIEW: REUBEN HOLLEBON

Words: Emma DeBono
Thursday 19 May 2016



Producer and British alternative musician, Reuben Hollebon, has seemed to find the key to balancing engaging melodies and deep emotion to create an experience for all listeners. His debut album, *Terminal Nostalgia*, will be released on May 20th. We caught up with him at The Rockwood Music Hall in downtown Manhattan to talk about his album, his sound, and what he feels being terminally nostalgic really means.

Emma DeBono: *Can you talk a bit about your debut album that comes out this upcoming week? What are you hoping the overall reception of this album will be, or what do you hope fans will takeaway from it?*

Reuben Hollebon: Well, undeniably I'm hoping that people listen to it and acknowledge that it happens (laughs). The album is a collection of songs that I've been mauling around with for the past two or three years. I write a lot of song and slowly some rise and you are aware that, that is graded against myself as one of the better ones and you start to piece the album together. But I never really finish a song on an album until I finish almost everything else around it and what its all going to be, because the color of that song affects the color of the next song. Hopefully it shows quite a comprehensive range of different influences and genres. I got to play a lot of different instruments, as

well. Not just guitar. I have an organ, I have a bass. For a bit played the drum but I mainly leave that to drummers. I got quite a few friends and producers to join in with some of the production making as well, which makes me play different. It makes me much more relaxed and it reminds me that you have to perform. You can very used to staying in a little box and playing to yourself, but that doesn't connect with anyone. It's much better when you can stand in front of someone and sing.

ED: *Jumping off of that – I know, although you did work with producers here and there to move along the process, you mainly produced “Terminal Nostalgia” on your own. What was that process like? I know its one thing to be an artist, go into a studio and put your lyrics over a track/give input, but it's a very different and more intimate for the listener and the artist when you are choosing every beat or instrument or note that completes the overall message of the album.*

RH: Well, the way I do any of the songs is I try to work on them at home; I potentially take them to my studio and mock up something that felt right. I would then take that to – Lee Russell, Grady Dodge, Charlie Hubele, Neil Abraham, Coen Neimans were people that helped me at the time. So I would try and play these songs in front of these people and, if the vibe was right, would capture the initial form of the song. At which I would take it and work on it and come back to them a say, yah know, “what do you think?” Have I gone off into my own little box and is that interesting? Or do I need to come back to the real world a little bit. And that little bit of reflection. Not necessarily their input but me getting to explain it to them helped me decide where I wanted to go.

ED: *What inspired you to name the album “Terminal Nostalgia”?*

RH: That was largely a phrase in a Kurt Vonnegut book. To try to quote it now would be difficult, but he was caught in the terminal stages of nostalgic romance. At the time, just the two words stuck really together to me. To remind you how all those experiences in life from the past are there and seem to meld into each other. And it was also to a point where I was travelling a lot. I was getting frustrated with everyone travelling and taking pictures of stuff before they even got there. It happened the other day the Blue Maser. There was one woman in the car before us and every single landscape, she'd run up with her camera, get back in her car and go. Yah know, you're not documenting it for yourself to look at. Enjoy and experience now. And then maybe take some type of memento from it. It's almost terminal in like the dying sense of nostalgia. Nostalgia is good, but it not as important as now.

ED: *There is this beautifully aesthetic, emotional element to your sound. What feeling do you try to invoke in listeners when they turn on your music?*

RH: A friend of mine who has never heard me play music, we have known each other for two years and I said I want to know what you think. And he said, “As long as your making it in the right way, with real intent and love, I'm going to like it because I get along with you.” I think he's getting back to the idea that we share, everyone shares an experience. So I have some very significant feelings about certain subjects. There's only one love song, but there's quite a lot of metaphysics, there's some stuff about dementia and mental illnesses. There's some stuff about the world, there's some stuff about

society and socialism. And I just presume that if I had made the track in the manner that I want there will be enough people who share enough with me that they'll all feel appreciated. So hopefully if I'm happy then they're happy.

ED: *How did you first get your start in music?*

RH: I picked up a guitar, went to guitar college with in a month having just picked up a guitar, was obviously not a good as everyone else. Realized I knew how to plug things in, so I went and knocked on the door of a local studio and bugged this guy every week 'can I come in? Can I come in?' and every week he tell me I haven't got any work for you, you're going to be bored. One day I come in and he's hung-over. He was like I want to sit on the couch all day. You've seen some very basic stuff. The band is already in the other room. I'm going to tell you how to do this. And we started this operation where he was hung-over, I would sit at the desk and he would tell me how to do the job. And, before you know it, I was recording bands every single day and I followed that into working in the more professional environment in London doing film soundtracks and other bands, and learned and got inspired enough to continue to write, continue to learn how to sing. It took me four or five years to learn how to sing in the way that I wanted to – to realize I'm singing about myself. Then it was the map process of locking into a record to present to someone else. Which I might get good by the third album

ED: *I know you are originally from Norfolk, England and now reside in London. What is it like to come overseas and perform at things like SXSW or in NYC?*

RH: I mean it's the best job I've ever had and I've had a lot of jobs. There's always a different engagement with an audience. Regardless if you a venue two nights in a room, the audience is going to be different. There's a very subtle quality of characters that you register in different places. But I think mainly in America, for a positive, its very engaging. It's very encouraging as a musician. And it makes it very exciting because there are a lot of opportunities. And you realise you can spend a year touring the east coast. And you can have a life doing just that. Or you can do just some cities. It just leaves a lot of options open.

ED: *What's in store for you next after these shows? Do you think you'll hit the road for sometime to promote the album?*

RH: Well we've got European festival season. I can't say which ones just yet. We've got, hopefully, a U.S tour across the summer followed by an extensive European tour in September and maybe another more extensive U.S tour after that. Plus recording. I'm writing for the next piece of music that we will be recorded before the end of the end of the year.

<http://spindlemagazine.com/2016/05/interview-reuben-hollebon/>