

IMAGINED ORDER – a biography

***'Deep in the woods in your tiny little house/There is a story to be told/It's read from a book that's wrinkled and old/The cover opens, the story unfolds.'* The Echo In The Halls Of This House**

Here's a good one: three musicians who've known each other for aeons, and who just happen to be the errant sons of three fundamentalist Preachers, decide to form a band and call it Imagined Order. The world is not as it seems, and the fact that there's no Wikipedia entry for (the phrase) imagined order seems to augur well. An imagined order may be ... a rule or restriction that people believe to be real, even when it's not grounded in an objective reality, but the name, at least for this bunch of peculiarly talented interlocutors, seems peculiarly apt nonetheless: imagined orders are a by-product of the human search for meaning, and it's interesting to note that Christianity, democracy and capitalism seem to fit the bill as likely beneficiaries.

Naturally, if it's meaning you're looking for, then you've come to the right place as Imagined Order have it in spades. Essentially formed as a very real three-piece on February 5th 2018 – and apologies for not being more specific - Imagined Order are not what they seem, and yet so much more than what we could have hoped for. Their debut album *The Echo In The Halls Of This House* – which has, ahem, echoes of Queens of the Stone Age, Nirvana and Kasabian – is a revelation, and yet it'll feel like something you've had knocking around the house for years.

Imagined Order are Shawn Turner (guitars, voice), Joshua Moore (drums) and Dan Leffler (bass, engineering). Hailing respectively from Springfield (Missouri), Tennessee and Illinois, and each now variously residing in Missouri, Nashville and Los Angeles - and perhaps all parts in between – this triumvirate's quondam acquaintance can only be described as .. a labyrinthine affair: Dan, who includes Audioslave as part of his studio engineering CV, and Chris Cornell as a personal inspiration, recalls erstwhile production duties on Shawn's earliest recorded outings as part of Johnny Q. Public, but it was surely a chance encounter with ace stickman Moore, at the Whisky a Go-Go in LA, that lit the 'Order's touch-paper. Moore, who cites John Bonham and Buddy Rich as drumming idols, was living in Los Angeles at the time, and despite subsequently becoming part of the musical furniture within the Turner/Leffler axis, a return to Nashville meant that it wasn't until much later that Imagined Order became anything more than an imagined reality.

Aeons later still – I told you this route was labyrinthine - Shawn had been living back in Missouri for quite some time when a family member committed suicide. The death hit Shawn hard, a fact that can only fully be acknowledged when you know that Shawn spent three hours on the morning of the funeral writing and recording a

song which he proceeded to take to the funeral so he could play it for the amassed throng of mourners. The song may have marked the point when Imagined Order were born, but it surely meant much more than this: Shawn had been in a dark enough place already without confronting such extraordinary trauma, but the song somehow came to represent his own truth, and a way of dealing with the demons that had haunted him for many years.

Fast forward to the here and now, and you hear these demons surfacing on songs like Never Had A Chance – “Tuesday morning/Late for work/I’m going to kill myself today/Start the car/Let the motor turn/Fill the room/With exhaust and fumes” – Ora – “It’s inside of you/killing you/bleeding through/all of you” – and Champagne – “I would do anything/to save you from the hurt that’s hurting me/I’ve tried everything/ But I can’t stop the hurt in me/and it’s hurting you/and killing me.” Best of all is Leprosy – featuring Angie Turner on vocals – a song inspired by the memory of Shawn and Angie’s father yelling that Angie would contract leprosy if she left the house and disobeyed his orders. Correspondingly, Shawn remembers road trips in which his father would stop the car outside a church, before interrupting the service in order to proclaim, “God wants me to speak.” Four hours later, the family would be on their way, but it’s hard not to believe that events like this – as well as memories of Shawn’s father standing over him, shouting “God is disgusted with you” surfacing as lines like ‘God decides/what you see/when we see/what we see/ inside of you’ in the aforementioned Ora – didn’t somehow over-egg life’s pudding.

Commendably enough, Shawn didn’t deal with all this familial disorder by building a church; instead, he went one better, and built a studio. That studio deep in the heart of Missouri and called The Black Palace (natch), was the venue for that fateful first meeting as Imagined Order, although it was a conversation between Shawn and his wife – “there’s an echo in the halls of this house” – that threw up the album title. And when Shawn heard about the plight of Mohini, a regal white tiger kept in captivity, he knew he had to retell the story somehow: the tiger spent many years pacing restlessly back and forth in the cramped quarters afforded by her twelve-by-twelve foot-cage (with iron bars and a cement floor) as part of Washington DC’s National Zoo; eventually she was given several acres of hills and trees to explore, but she wasn’t interested and lived out the rest of her days pacing around in a corner until an area twelve-by-twelve-feet was worn bare of grass; the image of the tiger crouching behind the bars is used as the artwork for the album and would come to represent Shawn’s view of reality; even when we are free, we are still somehow held captive.

Of course, all of this wouldn’t matter one jot, if the music wasn’t so fucking special: Shawn’s voice has been described by Josh Homme as “idiosyncratic, tonally different and emotive” and it’s hard not to disagree: on Imagined Order (the song) one is reminded of the plaintive cries of Thom Yorke or Ozzy Osborne as Shawn

hollers, 'Screams – from the mountain tops' and at times the band sound like the bastard sons of Faith No Moore, Black Sabbath and The Verve. But I'll leave it for Josh Homme to sum things up: "Imagined Order are hard to pigeon hole which I look at as a blessing. People whose motivations are to sell stuff look at this as a curse, because anything sounding different means they have to actually work hard. Haha." Haha, indeed.

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