SACKS AND CO.

The New Pornographers

The Former Site Of

Photo Courtesy of The New Pornographers

A woman is trapped on a cruise ship. A preacher decides to go down with his town. A man at the florist finds himself lost in the meaning of the arrangement. These and other people at personal and societal extremes are the subjects of ten timely, timeless short stories collected as meticulously crafted pop songs by The New Pornographers on their forthcoming album, The Former Site Of*, out March 27 on Merge Records.*

The album, like *Continue as a Guest*, finds The New Pornographers—bandleader A.C. Newman, Neko Case, Kathryn Calder, John Collins, and Todd Fancey—expanding their already rich catalog in surprising fashion. Joined for this album by legendary session drummer Charley Drayton (Divinyls, The Cult, The Rolling Stones, Fiona Apple), the space contained in a New Pornographer's song has never been this clearly articulated or generously textured, giving a distinct pulse to the characters whose lives spill out in Newman's tender, evocative lyrics.

The Former Site Of adds new depth to the sound Newman shook loose through building and recording in a home studio, fine-tuning the band's creative process far beyond the lockdown-era necessities of remote collaboration. "Having time in my studio really opened things up," he explains. "I don't like wasting my bandmates' time, and always felt guilty when I'd give them a song, ask them to do something, then completely change the song and ask them to do it again. Now I can get the skeleton of a song together first—just a couple of elements, the key feeling, really as little as possible—before bringing it to the band and running from there."

album artwork

Two albums into this shift, The New Pornographers are creating universes of intricately textured sound and narrative detail, every layer keyed to reveal an unexpected new facet. As on *Continue as a Guest*, one of the more readily apparent layers is the way a song forms itself around a featured instrument. On ***The Former Site Of***, it's a mandolin which, in Carl Newman's hands, lends lead single **"Votive"** its sense of acceleration as it builds from the atmospheric sweep of its synth and keyboard opening to a classic, wide-open jam.

"Hands are cupped around a match / I'm just trying to keep the lights on," Newman sings on the track, the metaphor—hanging on despite the precarity of life—a thread that weaves through ***The Former Site Of***. **"Bonus Mai Tais"** is, in a sense, about the flame going out, Newman writing directly of meeting a friend with advanced cancer for drinks, disarmed by their candor in the face of death. It is a brutally sad song, the anguish of the moment hanging in Newman's voice, and one of the band's most beautiful, with Neko Case's and Kathryn Calder's harmonies acting as the scene's ethereal mirror.

The Former Site Of places many of its subjects on the edge of oblivion—their time growing short, their situation doomed—but hanging on. This is also true when The New Pornographers turn their focus inward as they do on **"Pure Sticker Shock,"** Newman's lyrics grappling with self-worth. That they can identify themselves among such a disparate cast—even the Cassini-Huygens satellite of **"Spooky Action"**—ties the album together before the final repeated lyric of its title track, the way into the heart of each of these songs warmly lit and inviting. Far from being the expected next chapter from The New Pornographers, ***The Former Site Of*** is an argument against expectation by a band that continues to evolve rather than rest on their laurels. Even in its darkest or most self-deprecating moments, there is an effervescence to the music here that is irresistible, an affirmation that the struggle of its characters and the listener, like a photograph of a distant planet, is worth it.

SACKS AND CO.

The New Pornographers

The Former Site Of

LYRICS

1. GREAT PRINCESS STORY

Quite a view from my deck chair,
sailor on this ship of doom
Like the fable of the astronaut:
Wanted space but there's only room

Been singin' in the rain,
got to keep those spirits up
while we're all waiting to be saved
It was tightly rehearsed but gave
the impression of pure improv
The impression of pure improv

Now we're watching Oscar bait,
because the paywall's been torn down
Well at least all the drinks are free,
as free as the trapped can be

And the jokes get darker as
all the nights get longer, yeah
All the barstools like pylons set,
at the scene of the accident

And the reflections of the blinking
stars in the Lido pool…
it just breaks my heart

Oh I hope for the waves…

Gonna find the lifeboat plans–
And escape under blue moon
Well you know love and death, they say
They will both take your breath away

And midnight gets earlier,
but your eyes adjust to the light,
You wonder where everyone went,
Left the scene of the accident

And the reflections of the blinking stars
in the Lido pool…
it just breaks my heart

Oh I hope for the waves…

And the reflections of the blinking stars
in the Lido pool…
it just breaks my heart

2. PURE STICKER SHOCK

The thing about fortune,
it does no favors,
and it's form fitting,
you barely know that it's there

In a pure sticker shock
At my price cut by half
but you say I look happy
and I start to laugh
You see the problem I have

The heart is always here,
you forget it's beating
The heart is always here,
you forget it's beating
Like a gift that you didn't remember giving
The gift you never remember giving

In a pure sticker shock
at the price on my head
In a pure sticker shock
thought I'd get more for it

In a pure sticker shock,
I gave up on eloquence
and if that's what I said,
it's probably what I meant
You see the problem, my friend

The heart is always here,
you forget it's beating
The heart is always here,
you forget it's beating
Like a gift that you didn't remember giving
The gift you never remember giving

In a pure sticker shock,
at the price on my head
Like the apple with only a bite out of it
It's a hard sell, my friend

The heart is always here,
you forget it's beating
The heart is always here,
you forget it's beating
Like a gift that you didn't remember giving
The gift you never remember giving

In a pure sticker shock…

3. BALLAD OF THE LAST PAYPHONE

I had to see it with my very eyes
at the Museum of the City of New York
It had the offhand grace,
you will find in the last ones left alive

Well they took it from Times Square in May
Little fanfare or paid respect
Yeah, first comes love, then comes pity,
then it's terminal velocity

Nothing major, man,
It's just the last payphone

I had to see it with my very eyes,
For advice from the just left behind
Reverse the charges!
I tried, but it had no lightning inside

Did you get a good look at their face?
'cause often thieves have not gone very far
And they're not strangers, they rarely are
And they're not strangers…

they rarely are

Nothing major, man,
It's just the last payphone

Yeah, first comes love, then comes pity,
then it's terminal velocity

4. SPOOKY ACTION

Put this in front of any crowd
They will be on their knees or their feet

a rolling count scattered the moons
and I am in its debt, in its keep

A spooky action, a close-up magic,
A rush and push
the thermal noise of the evening,
Have you seen it though…
The way that it's meant to be seen?
The way that it's meant to be seen?

As I close up here, wish me well,
"To 13 years on a dead man's ship!"
I will not live to tell the tale,
But I hope the shot was worth it

A spooky action, a close-up magic,
A rush and push
the thermal noise of the evening
Have you seen it though…
The way that it's meant to be seen?
The way that it's meant to be seen?

Filling my boots with stardust,
Filling my pockets up with rocks
Follow the breath of empire, rise and fall

A series of nail-biting dives
and I am done, I'm on the cloud,
Looking for endings in the mirrors
The darling buds of come what may
The way that it's meant to be seen…

Filling my boots with stardust,
Filling my pockets up with rocks,
Follow the breath of empire, rise and fall

And I see the lone propeller,
labor of moonlets, then one last turn…
to take in Titan, the famous giant,
the burning god
Oh have you seen the stray arc of Daphnis,
at Keeler's edge,
the way that it's meant to be seen?

5. WISH YOU COULD SEE ME I'M KILLING IT

Why am I taking so long buying flowers
When I could not do it and say that I did?
I wish you could see me I'm killing it

With all I'm learning
about baby's breath and aster,
Not the person you'd remember, yes and no
But I wish you could see me I'm killing it
Wish you could see me I'm killing it

She was the one that loved them, yeah,
You wouldn't care either way,
"Just get the ones they have on sale"
I can almost hear you say it

Why am I taking so long buying flowers,
Staring down heather and bougainvillea?
I wish you could see me I'm killing it

No one is keeping score out in the graveyard
No one to remind you
about thoughts and how they count
But I wish you could see me I'm killing it
Wish you could see me I'm killing it

There's lavender, delphinium,
The filler that plays with the space,
Can't all be roses, can't all be lilies, no,
No, where is the art, for God's sake?

Why am I taking so long buying flowers?
It's where I get some of my best thinking done
I wish you could see me I'm killing it,
I wish you could see me I'm killing it

6. VOTIVE

My hands are cupped around a match,
I'm just trying to keep the lights on,
but a lighthouse should not be
in league with the rocks
though at some point
it's all uncharted waters

I didn't see you there…

Hands are cupped around a match,
I'm just trying to keep the lights on,
With the martyrs, in the tombs,
with the saints,
or whoever wants to burn, whatever

I didn't see you there…

Hands are cupped around a match,
I'm just trying to keep the lights on,
If you wanted quick results, said the night,
then I think you should have been a surgeon

I didn't see you there…

Or has it already gone out…
Hands are cupped around a match
I'm just trying to keep the lights on…
I didn't see you there…

7. WINE REMEMBERS THE WATER

When the tide goes out,
gotta wonder if it ever wanted to leave
and not come back

Like a frisbee on the roof
Under the sun's living proof
thinks 'heaven ain't so bad'

Does the wine remember when
it was the water?
When you stop to get clean, that's when
things start to go missing

Goin' out of business,
open but the shelves picked clean,
All ghost and no machine,
Like a crow doesn't know
that it has wings, it just goes,
the hills just shrink and grow,
in a transforming world

Does the wine remember when
it was the water?
When you stop to get clean, that's when
things start to go missing
Does the wine remember
when it was the water?

8. CALLIGRAPHY

The trick with poison, you sip.
God knows it's Armageddon somewhere.

Action and reaction:
the new calligraphy
The motion of a brush as natural, unplanned,
as a stick through the sand.

The trick with poison, you blend
God knows it's Armageddon somewhere

Traditional in the technique,
but then again
it's more ink spilled than anything.
More ink spilled than anything.

Delivered, Delivered
With love, with love, with love

The trick with poison, you sip.
God knows it's Armageddon somewhere.

Attack and decay: the new calligraphers

The motion of a brush as natural, unplanned,
as a stick through the sand.

The trick with poison, you give
A tree bending with the wind.

Traditional in the technique
but then again
more ink spilled than anything.
more ink spilled than anything.

Delivered, Delivered
With love, with love, with love

The trick with poison, you sip
The trick with poison, you sip

Delivered, Delivered
With love, with love, with love

9. BONUS MAI TAIS

The sidereal doo-wop of the rain
on the skylight, yeah it played
First time I'd seen you since when
the cancer nearly did you in

Like always, some fancy spread,
a themed drink, it is just your way
Customs you're still keeping up
Scorpions or boulevardiers

The sidereal doo-wop of the rain
on the skylight, yeah it played
You're calling this the bonus round
I don't want to call it that, though…

But in case I can't make it back,
in case I don't make it back…
I'll have one more bonus mai tai…

The sidereal doo-wop of the rain
on the skylight, yeah it played
You splurged and bought a new TV,
said, "Hey, you can't take it with you!"

And what could I do but agree,
knowing dick all about such things,
and we love this song, it's a classic hit
Yeah, Thompson Twins, they rarely missed

In case I can't make it back,
in case I can't make it back
I'll have one more bonus mai tai…

You said, "Thank God I didn't know…
any earlier I was sick,
because it wouldn't have changed
a thing for me"
which blurred into the cocktail history…

Once it depleted rum supplies,
Post depression, the tiki craze,
But you have to use curaçao,
orange juice is frowned upon

Oh if I don't make it back,
Oh if I can't make it back
I'll have one more bonus mai tai…

The sidereal doo-wop of the rain
on the skylight…

10. THE FORMER SITE OF

Oh our land, it is sinking,
but the country, it is rising
Either betting on us floating,
or they're counting on us dying

They say, "Leave! Leave, you madman!"
Try to talk, talk sense to me,
But maybe he will part the waters
Like he did back with the Red Sea

So goodbye, all you plank roads
all you liveries, mills and derricks…
Just a steeple, bell for company,
houses long gone, carted off on wheels

Here on the roof of a church,
so goes all of your good work
You're not too far off, my friend,
to say I'm off the deep end

I am famous in the city
as a fool on his last stand
Some call to me as they row past
Slowly, silent, I raise my glass

Left my collar and my congregation,
Not a sailor, not a shepherd,
just a lighthouse in rough weather

Here on the roof of the church,
so goes all of your good work
You're not too far off, my friend,
to say I'm off the deep end

The rooftops, they slip
out of sight, silent, gone
Was I a good captain
as the vessel went down?

I ask at the gate as the trumpets all sound
Was I a good captain
as the vessel went down?

This great ship of Zion
makes room for the next
What we lost on the ground,
the sky will protect

Soon unbroken surface will make us secret,
as a great noose of water
closes 'round the neck

And an old woman's wave
from the deck of a ship
says hello or come help, it is hard to tell

And a man's hypnotized by the flowers
A prayer
He finds his own way to talk to the dead

And a boy mad with love says the
Earth is not round
He would say anything to not be alone

And the wine recalls when it was water,
and next…
A flame tries to cling to the life it has left

All of them shadows
that reminded me of mine

All of them shadows
that reminded me of mine

SACKS AND CO.

The New Pornographers

The Former Site Of

CREDITS

1. Great Princess Story
2. Pure Sticker Shock
3. Ballad of the Last Payphone
4. Spooky Action
5. Wish You Could See Me I'm Killing It
6. Votive
7. Wine Remembers the Water
8. Calligraphy
9. Bonus Mai Tais
10. The Former Site Of

Produced by *A.C. Newman*

Recorded at
Little Blue, Woodstock, NY, engineered by *A.C. Newman*
The Hive, Victoria, BC, engineered by *Colin Stewart* and additional engineering by *Kathryn Calder*
Monkhouse Studio, Mount Tremper, NY, engineered by *Zach Djanikian*
Fidelitorium Recordings, Kernersville, NC, engineered by *John Pfiffner*
Afterlife Studios, Vancouver, BC, engineered by *John Raham*, studio assistant *Brendan Guy*
Creation Audio, Minneapolis, MN, engineered by *John Fields*
Welcome to the Trailerdome, Galiano Island, BC, engineered by *John Collins*
Carnassial Sound, Saint Johnsbury, VT, engineered by *Jeff Galegher*
Todd Fancey's house, Vancouver, BC, engineered by *Todd Fancey*
Area 52 Studios, Saugerties, NY, engineered by *Dave Cook*
Sikiyadigo, Chicago, IL, engineered by *Macie Stewart*
8EAST, Vancouver, BC, engineered by *JP Carter*
The Roost, Brooklyn, NY, engineered by *Nora Stanley*
Vancouver, BC, engineered by *David Carswell*
West Village Audio, Evanston, IL, engineered by *Nora O'Connor*

Mixed by *Colin Stewart*
except "Wish You Could See Me I'm Killing It" by *A.C. Newman*
and "Bonus Mai Tais" by *John Collins*

Mastered by *Matthew Barnhart* at Chicago Mastering Service, Chicago, IL

All songs written by *A.C. Newman* (SOCAN)

Album Art *Michael Arthur*
Package Design and Layout *Daniel Murphy*

The New Pornographers:
A.C. Newman – vocals, guitar, bass, keyboards
John Collins – bass, guitar, keyboards
Kathryn Calder – keyboards, vocals
Neko Case – vocals
Todd Fancey – guitar

Additional Players:
Charley Drayton – drums
Zach Djanikian – bass, guitar, mandolin, soprano and tenor saxophones
Macie Stewart – strings
JP Carter – trumpet, effects
Nora Stanley – alto saxophone, tenor saxophone
Paul Rigby – pedal steel
Nora O'Connor – vocal

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT KRISTA WILLIAMS, JOE COHEN OR CARLA SACKS AT SACKS & CO., 212.741.1000, KRISTA@SACKSCO.COM, JOE.COHEN@SACKSCO.COM OR CARLA@SACKSCO.COM.