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August 23, 2024 -

As told to Caitlin McCann, 2161 words.

Tags: Music, Art, Process, Adversity, Inspiration.

On not sacrificing your creative integrity

Musician and painter Rivka Ravede (SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE) discusses adapting to change, emotional perseverance, and how to keep being a band when it's continually changing shape on you.

How did the process of writing the new record, YOU'LL HAVE TO LOSE SOMETHING, differ from other records with you living in Lisbon and the other guys living in Philly?

It's not super different because, honestly, Zack [Schwartz] writes most of the songs. Then he'll bring it to Corey [Wichlin] and me, and I'll write my vocal parts for it. So we kind of always work separately. But this is the first record where I wrote a song for the record.

Which song is that?

"Found A Body." Technically, writing the record wasn't super different, it was more so just emotionally different because we're in a different space now. All of the shit, like me and Zack breaking up, that stuff.

What was it like bringing a full song to the band for the first time?

I was nervous. I've always been in more of a supporting role which is fine with me, I'm good at that. Since the dynamic of the band has changed so much and honestly, maybe my entire brain chemistry since I turned 30, I felt like I wanted to be a little more assertive in my own voice in the band. Zack always wanted me to and I never did but now that the two of us are not a unit anymore, it felt appropriate for me to start on this record.

It's cool that something so difficult could get you out of your comfort zone creatively. That's just what it takes sometimes. Did you guys feel like the band was over after the break up as well?

Right after it happened, I thought, "Okay, this is probably it." We tried to make it work at the very beginning, but it was still a little too fresh. It was just clear like, "Oh, no, we need to take a little bit more time because to do anything together right now would be kind of insane." But then more time passed and both of us were in different relationships and then we just figured it out.

You're both still so committed to the band that you've found a way to... maybe "persevere" is too intense of a word here?

I think persevere is a pretty good word.

Like emotional perseverance.

Yeah, because a breakup is the worst thing.

It's a big reality check. The title of the album suggests that and also describes my own experience with turning 30. I had to lose things in order to come to terms with reality because sometimes that's the only way to gain perspective. It was hard.

Me too. I watched the movie *Monkey Man* last night. I hated it but there was a part where he was like, "You have to destroy something to get something new," or something like that. But the movie sucked [laughs].

I don't want to overanalyze the lore of the band more than necessary, but you have had so many lineup changes and transformed so many times, yet that hasn't stopped y'all from being a band. But the break up is probably the biggest transformation to happen because it's a foundational shift.

Yeah, it was also a pretty big change after 2020 when Pat [Conaboy] left. That felt like a big shock. He had been in the band since the beginning. It started with me, Zack, and Pat. We were a three-piece. Then in 2020, it seemed like everybody went through this awakening. Pat realized that he didn't want to do it anymore. That was a huge thing.



You'll Have To Lose Something, oil on canvas

I remember being surprised when he told me he left the band. I didn't realize at the time that it was the three of you from the very beginning, though. That's huge. So how do you keep being a band when it's continually changing shape on you?

That's kind of how everything in life sort of is. Everything is constantly changing, so the only thing that you can really do is adapt.

Change is the only constant.

Right. We just adapt and continue on.

When I toured with you, Corey wasn't in the band yet, but that was seven years ago, so he's been in the band for a long time now. I don't think I've met him, but he's such a solid fit.

Yeah, definitely. Corey contributes a great, great deal. I feel like the last time there was somebody else in the band that was contributing as much as when Tim [Jordan] was in the band and he was sort of writing songs for Spirit. But Corey and Zack work really well together, they have the same taste. I feel like the three of us have the same taste. It feels good. I hope it stays like this for a while. I think that this is going to be it until we die.

Despite all the changes, every album still sounds like a Spirit album, yet no album sounds the same as the other. Aside from you contributing a full song, how has the recent dynamic change shown through in the songwriting?

I think that this record is like... I mean not all of the songs are about the breakup, but I think that all I can really do is write about my own life. You know what I mean? Like painting, writing, whatever, I just write about my life. It's my perspective, Zack's perspective, and Corey's perspective of being on the outside [of the break up], but also weirdly in it, or in a weird kind of throuple situation. It did affect him. Being in a band is kind of like being in a polycule.

And with touring you're in an environment that can feel so energetically extreme because everyone is in such close proximity to each other all the time. Do you actually like touring?

Yeah, I love it and I hate it. If I don't do it for a while there's a part of me that doesn't feel totally like myself but I also am a really introverted person and I need a lot of time by myself. It gets really exhausting. In my early twenties, I could go, but now I'm in my thirties and I'm tired.

That's how I feel about just going out and socializing in general. I also use the word *socializing* more

now, like I'm a robot, instead of saying, "I'm going to hang out with my friends," because it's this thing that I know is good for me but I just don't have the energy to spend the way I used to.

I know. It's like when you play The Sims, and you have the social bar. If I don't do it for a while, I'm like, "Oh, shit, it's turning yellow. I got to go out and recharge my social bar."

Do you feel like Philly as an environment has influenced the band creatively?

Maybe. There's a certain grimy texture to Philly that I feel like seeps into our music. It's kind of like that Ween record that everybody describes as being "brown." The lore is that they both had pneumonia or something, and they were doing whippets. I don't know the story, but it's like they were doing whippets while they had bronchitis or something, and that's why it sounds good. So I feel like the environment definitely influences the way things sound.

There's a tasteful harshness to certain songs. Even the songs with hard left turns are still tied together and melodic. I feel like that's a thing that Philly people understand.

You think?

I don't know. Maybe I just romanticize Philly too much because I miss it all the time.

I don't know if the harsh turns and stuff is specific to Philly. When we went on tour with Palm, in 2018, I felt like we were the bands where people don't know when to clap. Everybody's just like, "I'm not sure if the song is over," or "I'm not sure how to bob my head."

I feel like Spirit and Palm are every band's favorite band.

Do you think so? I feel like that's kind of a way of saying most people don't like us.

That's not what I mean. [laughs]

I know that's not what you mean. [laughs]

What I mean is, there's a lot of respect for you guys. Longevity is a word I associate with Spirit. You've been a band for so long, without sacrificing your creative integrity or creative control. The music industry hasn't changed you in the way it changes some bands.

Thank you. I feel like we might just not be capable of writing a normal song. We went into this record with the intention of, "We're going to write a really straightforward record. We're going to write straightforward songs that don't have hard left turns." But I mean, you've heard the record, it's not really like that. I think that there are some straightforward songs but it seems like we kind of failed in that way.



Natural Devotion II, oil on canvas

The things that are true to y'all can't help but seep through and shine. Speaking of, can you talk about the album artwork you painted?

We didn't have a lot of inspiration for the cover. I didn't really know what I was going to paint, so

Corey pulled up a picture on his phone that his cousin had sent him, because she's a nurse, and he was like, "Look at this," and I was like, "Okay, I guess I'll paint that." Then Dan [Brennan], who did the video [for "Let The Virgin Drive"], took that and was like, "Okay, I'm going to tie this into the video." So now that's become part of the world which is good because otherwise, I feel like it wouldn't make any sense.

It's so on the nose with the album title. The imagery in the video is a woman losing her finger. It's such a literal interpretation.

It's kind of disgusting, and it's kind of funny. The type of stuff that I like.

How important is it for you to have an art practice, like painting, outside of music? It's great that the two practices are able to merge in the world of Spirit but I know you also paint outside of band related things.

I've been a painter since I was a kid. It's kind of the only thing I've ever wanted to be. I've put in my 10,000 hours or whatever. Painting is really important to me in the way that if I don't do it I don't really feel like myself. The way that it has bled into making the album covers for Spirit has always been the best contribution I've been able to give to the band.

Will you ever have a show of your paintings?

I would like to. I don't know how to do that, so if somebody else wants to do it for me and just tell me where to be, then I would love to.

Rivka Ravede Recommends:

Nosferatu the Vampyre, 1979 by Werner Herzog. There are a couple of scenes in this movie that are both terrifying and make me laugh at the same time, like Kinski running around the town at night in this way that is so exaggerated it looks so incredibly stupid but also really magnificent.

The Secret History by Donna Tartt. I'm reading mostly fiction that is easy to digest lately, and this had everything I love, a group of friends bound together by a horrible secret, murder, a little philosophy, a little "will they won't they," undergrads coming of age, and a couple other sexy spicy things that I can't reveal because that would be a spoiler.

Resident Evil 4. If anyone is about to play an RE game for the first time and doesn't know where to start I would rec Biohazard and 4. This one is really fun and a little bit more arcade-y than puzzle heavy. Biohazard is scarier though and maybe the objectively best one.

Owning a dog. Having a dog is both rewarding and gives you the excuse to leave any social function early, "I have to go and check on the dog," "the dog needs to go out."

Preply. Preply is an app that helps you find teachers when learning a new language. I've been learning Portuguese for a year and I find it's best to have a teacher for a lot of reasons but for me, I am very lazy by nature, so the only way things get done is if there is the threat of someone being mad at me for not having done it and as a bonus my professora is now a minha melhor amiga.

Name

Rivka Ravede

Vocation

musician (SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE) and visual artist

Fact

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