

Dearly Beloved admires positivity, good looks

Dearly Beloved

With AIDE-DE-CAMP and The Populars
Tuesday, 12 September at 9pm
Sidetrack Café

ELIZABETH VAIL
Arts & Entertainment Staff

It's hard to believe, but the joy in Dearly Beloved's cheerfully rugged debut album, *You are the Jaguar*, came out of a dark place in bassist Rob Higgins' life. On 14 May, the former Change of Heart band member lost his father to a long battle with cancer. However, there was a silver lining to the tragedy: a number of punk-rock friendships were ultimately born out of the situation.

"During that time, I was spending a lot of time with [my father]," Higgins explains. "And that's when I made the album, in the evenings after being with him in the hospital. The album is very much framed by that experience, and as difficult as it was, it was really good for me to make the album because it was therapeutic for me; it was a place to put my energy, everyday."

"... I don't mean to sound conceited, because I'm not that type of person, but I saw us on TV and was like, 'Damn, we are good looking!'"

ROB HIGGINS

Recognizing his pain, a group of friends, including Niva Chow (vocalist), Damon Richardson (guitarist), Alex O'Rielly (drummer) and John Pogue (guitarist), joined together to help create the ultimate kind of musical catharsis.

"Everybody came together to make this record, and it was a generosity of spirit on their part because they knew

I was hurting, they knew I needed to make this record, and they knew I needed some help. I didn't want to do it all myself—that was an option at one point," Higgins admits. "I was just going to play all the instruments and do everything myself, [but] I decided it was nicer to have some friends around."

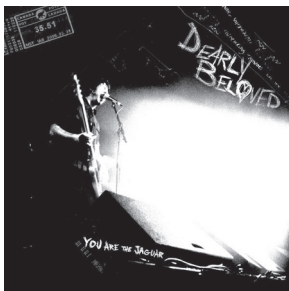
While it might seem odd to outsiders that a guy going through such a painful time in his life would come out with such an upbeat album, Higgins sees it as only natural. He made a decision when his father was sick that he wasn't going to "get fucked up over it." Instead, he vowed to become a positive contributor to the whole situation. No depressing music was going to come out of Higgins. "I didn't want to make a moeey, 'Oh, woe is me' album," he says. "I wanted to make a reverent shake-yer-ass album that celebrates life rather than the concept of death."

Indeed, the whole album ended up becoming a very personal project, but in the end, Higgins believes it's evolved into something much more universal. "I created Dearly Beloved as a vehicle for myself to make records," he reveals. "Now we're a band of people that play a ferocious 40-minute set that rips your face off!"

And when Dearly Beloved takes the stage at the Sidetrack on 12 September, you can expect just that. They'll be there with bells on—punk-rock bells, to be specific.

"Well, we look hot, we look so hot," Higgins says. "We were watching ourselves on MTV yesterday, and I don't mean to sound conceited, because I'm not that type of person, but I saw us on TV and was like, 'Damn, we are good looking! Look how good we look!'"

"When we play shows, we don't just come out there with T-shirts and jeans on. We dress to show respect for where Dearly Beloved came from because ... the name implies a wedding or a funeral or something formal, right? And when Dearly Beloved performs, we dress appropriately."



Dearly Beloved

You Are The Jaguar
Warner Records
www.dearlybeloved.ca

ELIZABETH VAIL
Arts & Entertainment Staff

With their debut album, *You Are the Jaguar*, Canadian punk group Dearly Beloved—comprised of five musicians borrowed from several other bands—serves up ten songs that provide ideal examples of bombastic gaiety. Loud, fast and happy, every track screeches and wails a rebel sound that's tempered by a cheerful and enthusiastic delivery by lead singer Rob Higgins. This odd mixture of happy-punk is pitch-perfect runs right through the album, but exhibits its potential in the first galloping song, "The Ride."

A cutesy back-and-forth between male vocals and the female backup singers is used to establish a fresh,

balanced fashion, but although it fits in with some of the rougher numbers like "The Ride," gleeful stomp "Manifesto" and mellower soft-rock "The Butler Routine," when wrongly used, it can make a song sound like a particularly spunky jingle for Old Navy (the ditty "Rugged Casual Sport" could sell many pairs of khakis).

Generally, though, there's consistent sound and energy throughout the album that makes for some entertaining listening. While rock is oftentimes pigeonholed as an angry, dissatisfied medium, it's a refreshing change to see that frenetic energy directed towards a more positive sound.

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