

Say Anything dare to defend their double album

The LA pop-rockers have also squared off with line-up changes and mental illness, but now find themselves on the upswing

musicpreview

Say Anything

With *Thrice* and *Attack in Black*
Sunday, 10 February at 6pm
Edmonton Event Centre

PAUL BLINOV
Arts & Entertainment Editor

A successful and acclaimed double-album is like the lost treasure of rock & roll: although many attempted to make one, few of such releases rarely result in commercial and critical gold. But as foolhardy as the quest may be, Los Angeles pop-rockers Say Anything are attempting to beat the odds with the release of their two-disc opus, *In Defense of the Genre*. According to keyboardist Parker Case, the 20-plus songs on the album are a gift to the fans who have waited for three years for any new material from the band.

"It's something we've talked about doing since day one," he explains. "The way I see it, there was so much time between *Is a Real Boy* and this record, it was made a double record to give the people who have waited so long for a lot of new material to enjoy. There were some cancelled tours, and this release got pushed back, so we [had to] tour on *Is a Real Boy* again."

Setbacks aren't unusual for Say Anything; in the early years, they were frustratingly common. Originally formed by singer-songwriter Max Bemis and drummer Cody Linder, the band has seen the usual line-up shifts of a young band—which currently



features Bemis, Linder, Case, guitarists/brothers Jake and Jeff Turner, and bassist Alex Kent—as well as some much more uncommon problems: Bemis is bipolar, and for a dark chapter in the band's history, he was paranoid of everyone else involved. His mental instability led to some cancelled tours, but after a final lineup juggle, Bemis' mental state started to pick up.

"I'd heard the band before I

actually joined, and all of those problems happened during that [time]," Case admits. "The point that I joined the band was right around the time that Max was coming out of all of that stuff that I thought was the 'dark' kind of thing. I joined at the same time [as the] guitar players, Jeff and Jake. [Since then], I feel like the band's been stable; all of those [bad] things—maybe it was the personnel at the time—I wasn't even there for."

Since then, it's been much clearer skies for the band. They spent Christmas successfully touring the UK—which was well acclaimed, considering their new album hasn't even dropped overseas, putting them in the exact same situation of their previous trip.

"It was good; last time we were over there, our first record, *Is a Real Boy*, hadn't come out yet. So that was interesting to see how many people

knew the songs from the Internet. Then we went back, [and] our new record hadn't come out over there. We did pretty well, especially for the amount that we go over there."

In defense of the double album, Case has only gushing words about his frontman's songcraft.

"All the songs were great on [*In Defense of the Genre*], so it wasn't like we were trying to pick better songs to make a smaller record."

Bryson still learning to express himself

musicpreview

Jim Bryson

With Shulyer Jansen
Thursday, 7 February at 8pm
The Blue Chair (9624 76 Avenue)

DAVID JOHNSTON
Arts & Entertainment Writer

He's been involved in music and bands since he was in high school, and he's currently on tour promoting his third album, *Where The Bungalows Roam*. But after it all, Jim Bryson still has qualms about the best way to express his musical intentions.

"The biggest struggle with music is just finding the way to communicate it," the Ottawa-based singer/songwriter notes. "It's like the old saying, 'Talking about music is like dancing to architecture.' It's tough to communicate something that's more about feel or tone."

Bryson got his professional debut with the band Punchbuggy before breaking apart to pursue his own solo career in 2000. And with his breakaway came the development of his own unique style, a blending of non-classical folk and hard rock. But the artist is hesitant about the exact location of his musical niche.

"I've been told I'm not quite folk enough to play the folk shows and

I'm not quite rock enough to play the rock shows," he laughs. "So I sort of exist in a hinterland that draws from everything around it. I like where I am."

"Once I got going at it, my goal was to not have a day job, and it's been four and a half years since I've had one," he continues.

That would be around the release date of his second album, *The North Side Benches*, which had a lot more musicians and artists involved compared to *Bungalows*, which was laid out over a shorter time frame than its predecessors.

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JIM BRYSON
SINGER-SONGWRITER

"It's the first time I didn't do a record where we all got together and rehearsed the songs. It was just my drummer and one other guy, and then we just recorded fast [...] and I played a lot of the instruments," Bryson says, adding that the album

is a little quieter and more pensive than his previous efforts, representing the gradual change in his unique style.

Bryson has been on his cross-country jaunt for *Bungalows* since back in October and just took a month off to "fart around at home" before continuing his musical journey westward with a new group of touring companions, including Shulyer Jansen and Baby Eagle.

"For the most part in my touring history, it's been with friends, people I've met through singles shows or through other people," Bryson says. "I've been sent on tour with people I didn't know before, but I've rarely had a bad experience [...]. Honestly, I've been pretty lucky."

Luck is a repeating factor for Bryson; he seems to accept his success and accolades with a noticeable aura of humility. But there's a lot of hard work involved for the rocker—he's spent a lot of time carving out his style, playing in other bands, and developing as an artist. There seems to be no stopping this Canadian songster—although you won't hear him admitting that.

"I always do it with the expectation that it's not going to last forever. I try to be pretty pragmatic and realistic about it all, and I feel very lucky to be able to do it. The more I'm at it, the luckier I feel."

