**ENTER SHIKARI BIOGRAPHY**

Prior to the writing and recording of A Kiss For The Whole World, Enter Shikari didn’t really exist. For almost two decades, their creative energies had been fuelled by the sights and sounds of dancing crowds in venues large and small. The communal bond with responsive audiences from St Albans to St Louis had powered their forward momentum. But not anymore. When the plans of an entire planet were placed on hold, for the first time in their career, the band were cast adrift from their people. For God knows how long, they were out of fuel.

What to do? What to do?

“At the time it felt like we ourselves, as musicians, were experiencing the death of our band,” says Rou Reynolds, Enter Shikari’s singer and principal songwriter. “It was like we were being shown our future by one of the ghosts in A Christmas Carol. It was as if we were looking down at ourselves. I could see I was still alive - I could see all the members were still alive – and I knew that we wanted to play. But circumstances meant that we were witnessing the group’s complete withdrawal into total inactivity.”

The arrival of A Kiss For The Whole World puts a stop to such dangerous behaviour. Enter Shikari are back. Music is back. “Be embraced, billions,” is the declaration on the titular opening song. Be embraced by the communality, creativity and connectivity of audiences and artists who are in it together. Who are united once more. As Enter Shikari thunder and weave their way through new songs such as *Dead Wood*, *goldfish* and the more than appropriately titled *feed your soul*, there is no room for doubt that the state mandated-absences of the early ‘20s have made the heart not just fonder, but stronger too. Praise be for a whole lotta shakin’ going on.

Of course, it should come as no surprise to discover that the spark that sent A Kiss For The Whole World spiralling into life came from the stage. On the evening of 19th June 2021, Enter Shikari headlined the three-day Download Pilot festival, at Donington Park, at which dozens of British music-makers, together with an audience of 10,000 people, attempted to make sense of the practicalities of playing live in a pandemic. Given that at the time no one could say for how long we’d be in this mess, the historic gathering was both joyous and precarious. It also served to ignite the flame on Rou Reynolds’ pilot light once more.

“There wasn’t a sudden explosion or a grand plan when it came to making an album,” the singer says. “It was more a case of, ‘Oh, music’s coming – oh great! – now grab a pen, and grab a guitar!’” What started as a trickle soon became a surge; the gift of song was back on the scene at last. “It was jubilant,” he recalls, “it was fast, it was furious.” But it was also a towering relief. “I just didn’t realise that the human and physical connection to other people were so central to how I write,” he says. “And it wasn’t that I was taking these things for granted, because I didn’t know they *could* be taken for granted. In the past, they’d simply always been there.”

As the world fumbled its way towards the light, by the spring of 2022 Enter Shikari had managed to reboot other aspects of their operation. In April of that year the four musicians descended on the coastal town of Chichester to make an album the momentum of which had gone from undetectable to inevitable in only a matter of months. Billeted for five weeks at a farmyard cottage so dilapidated that its owner *forgot* that it was listed on internet rental sites, the group’s new digs relied on solar panels for power. There was no central heating. There was no mains electricity into which to plug their “begged and borrowed” recording equipment. Finding warmth on often intemperate evenings involved chopping wood for the fire.

“It was a conscious decision to work like that,” Rou explains. “I think we wanted to bring back some sense of naivety. Because as soon as you walk into a normal studio, you have the in-house engineers who have their way of doing things. You have a producer who has his or her way of doing things. As a band in that kind of setting, it can sometimes seem like you’re the away team.”

Not just this, but the proud seam of independence that has been a part of the Shikari DNA long before anyone first heard their name meant that their transition into a bunch of damn hippies took no time at all.

“It’s quite the buzz to be able to say that all the tracking on this album was powered by the sun,” the singer says. “Because that aspect was fun, too. It really kept you grounded because you couldn’t record a guitar part and boil the kettle at the same time. A lot of planning had to go into each day.”

At first glance, A Kiss For The Whole World might not seem like the kind of music borne of what its author describes as “an existential crisis”. With its abundance of life-giving properties, its Technicolor palate and its fluent and literate merging of styles, the album’s dozen songs sound like the work of men with purpose. But the truth is that dark circumstances required Enter Shikari to become *repurposed.* The peril of having lost what made them strong has allowed them to grow stronger still. It's there, even, in the title of the new record. Because you’ve got to be a feeling *a lot* to want to plant a smacker on an entire planet.

“This album is exciting because the process was exciting, literally,” Rou explains. “It excited things in me that I thought I had lost completely. It was thrilling to make. It was uplifting. It was powerful. There was a desperation in wanting to be able to write again. I wanted to feel the buzz not just of live music, but of feeling the thrill from the very solitary experience of writing and being creative. Because that too is really exciting.”

And now that A Kiss For The Whole World is at last ready to meet its waiting public?

“It feels as if an unquenchable thirst has suddenly been quenched,” comes the answer.

**A Kiss For The Whole World is Enter Shikari’s seventh studio album. Each of its predecessors debuted in the top 10 of the Official UK album chart. As well as being the group’s lyricist, Rou Reynolds has published four books on Faber Music, of which A Treatise On Possibility is the most recent. In October 2022, the group published their official biography, Standing Like Statues, written by Luke Morton, also via by Faber Music. As well as headlining London’s 10,000 capacity Alexandra Palace on four occasions, the quartet have topped the bill at the John Peel and Leftfield stages at Glastonbury and the BBC Radio1 tent at the Leeds and Reading festivals. This year the group will headline the Slam Dunk festival in West Yorkshire and Hertfordshire. Enter Shikari are the shirt-sponsors for their local football team, St Albans FC.**

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