**Cult Leader Tactics: Album Overview**

Cult Leader Tactics is a satire on the genre of self-help manuals. For the first time since the late 1990’s, I have returned to making a satirical album. The Cult Leader Tactics manual details how to get to the top of your chosen profession, or how to get on in life in general and in affairs of the heart, by acting in a Machiavellian manner and employing dirty tricks or ‘Cult Leader Tactics’ to achieve your life goals.

Lyrically the album is made up of extracts from a fictitious book, ‘Cult Leader Tactics’, a parody of the self-help manual genre. I wrote the manual simultaneously to recording the record, extracts of which appear over 24 chapters in the 60-page book included in the deluxe version of the album. The album and manual come to the conclusion that after experiencing these types of human behaviour, the only true answer in life is love. On the album I collaborate with my co-producer P-Dub (Bjork, The Cure, Massive Attack) Steven Wilson and Gam from Sweat as well as my own band members Jon Barnett (Drums) Beau Bernard (Bass) and guitarists Ben Sink and Matt James.

**Track 1 - Cult Leader Tactics**

This song details my own personal experiences of being at the sharp end of Machiavellian and anti-social behaviour. Lyrically I play the part of a composite character made from various individuals I’ve met on my journey through the music industry. Musically my guitar playing is influenced by Ennio Morricone’s Western movie soundtracks and also there is a dulcimer on the track which is influenced by my interest in cult TV show soundtracks.

**Track 2 - Internationalle**

This is an anti-nationalism song, dealing with Machiavellian and manipulative behaviour in politics.  Specifically, Boris Johnson’s decision to back Brexit as a political career move, stoking up English nationalism, instead of acting with any conviction on the issue. Musically the track is a traditional rock band performance of guitars, bass and drums performed live at The Loft, my co-producer on the record, Paul ‘P-Dub’ Walton’s private studio facility. The track is performed by myself with my band Jon Barnett, Beau Bernard and Ben Sink.

**Track 3 - Dirty Trix**

Dirty Trix is the title of a chapter in the manual ‘Cult Leader Tactics’, which takes a satirical look at how to employ dirty tricks to get what you want out of the situations you face throughout your life and chosen career. This song ends with the lyric ‘Chapter 1, attack is the best form of defence’, referring to the first Chapter of the manual which can be read in the deluxe version of the album. On this recording I use some of my favourite Oberheim and Moog analogue synthesisers and also a vintage Sequential Circuits Drumtrax drum machine. This song was put together at my home studio, The Kitchen, whilst vocals and additional production were completed by myself and Paul ‘P-Dub’ Walton at his studio, The Loft.

**Track 4 - Cult Leader Tactics in E flat minor**

This track is an instrumental medley composed of different melodies from various songs on the album.  The song was written by me and orchestrated and arranged by Gam from the band Sweat and recorded at Sweat Studios in Peckham. Gam submitted ideas for his orchestration which he initially played as string samples, that included links between songs on the album. Paul ‘P-Dub’ Walton and I edited Gam’s orchestrations of the songs and we ended up with this concise piece. Unused ideas and links Gam submitted can be heard on the outtakes disc available on the deluxe set. This medley echoes previous medleys I put together on Mansun’s Attack Of The Grey Lantern and Six albums.

**Track 5 - You’ve Got No Life Skills, Baby**

This song takes a satirical look at the inadequacy of the modern man in a woman’s world. The song details a relationship break up, where one partner has misled the other into believing they wanted a permanent relationship, when in fact they wanted something less permanent, using Cult Leader Tactics to obtain what they wanted from the relationship. This references the chapter in the self-help manual ‘CLT in relation to affairs of the heart.’ Lyrically the song is detailing one party throwing a host of reasons back at the other as to why they didn’t want to continue the relationship, essentially using an ‘attack is the best form of defence’ strategy, the name of another chapter in the self-help manual.  Musically the chorus relies heavily on two countermelodies. I’ve returned to using a lot more countermelodies and harmonies on this record than I did on Spooky Action.

**Track 6 - U Killed My Fish**

This song chronicles a jealous rival using Cult Leader Tactics to adopt a friendly approach to a rival whilst stabbing them in the back. This results in them smashing their rival’s fishbowl, killing their fish, and smashing up their synthesizer as anger consumes them as their plan unravels. Adopting this ‘frenemy’ approach to situations is a chapter in the ‘Cult Leader Tactics’ manual. The song was performed live with my band at The Loft Studios. After we captured the take of the song we wanted, we then overdubbed Ebow guitar, a Korg M1 synthesizer and harmonies. I created the fishbowl sound by blowing a straw into a cup of water and recording it on my iPhone.

**Track 7 - Everyone Becomes A Problem Eventually**

This song details how to deploy a strategy from the manual of how to trick your lover when it comes to affairs of the heart. Lyrically I’m looking at how people can act in a manipulative fashion when it comes to gaining power in your personal relationships. I used a Moog Minimoog and Sequential Circuits Drumtrax to put this song together at my home studio during lockdown. My co-producer Paul ’P-Dub’ Walton collects vintage Seil Italian synthesizers, and I used a Seil Mono for the opening and closing motifs. On the outtakes disk in the deluxe set, I have included a jam session where I am writing the song over the songs drum machine pattern, coming up with various parts I eventually scrapped and busking lyrical ideas for the song.

**Track 8 - Annie**

I was once told I couldn’t have a song called Annie on an album. I subsequently found out the individual who told me this had acted in a manipulative manner towards me in the suppression of this song being released. I am now releasing the song to illustrate Cult Leader Tactics don’t always work. This forms a Chapter in the manual entitled ‘You Can’t Have a Song Called Annie’. I used a vintage Vox Continental II organ on this recording which I put through a Leslie Cabinet and spring reverb to emulate 1960’s production techniques. The piano used was a 1930’s Eavstaff recorded through an Abbey Road REDD pre-amplifier and AKG D19c microphone, some of the vintage equipment myself and co-producer Paul ‘P-Dub’ Walton collect.

**Track 9 - Talking Behind My Back**

‘Talking behind My Back’ is one of the tactics I detail in the Cult Leader Tactics manual. I’ve been at the sharp end of this type of behaviour on a number of occasions. You simply approach people surrounding your victim and tell them that said victim is talking about them behind their back. Then sit back and watch the chaos unfold. I describe this recording as an old school rocker that gives the album variety. I played the song with my band and then overdubbed backing the vocal harmonies later. I’ve included an early take of this song on the deluxe version of the album so the listener can hear the raw band performance before we overdubbed and mixed the track.

**Track 10 - Omega Man**

During the COVID lockdown I felt at times as if I was the last man alive as I lived alone. If I ventured out everywhere felt desolate and devoid of society. It reminded me of the film The Omega Man, based on the Richard Matheson novel, I Am Legend. I spoke to my friend, musician Steven Wilson about his experience of how the lockdown was affecting his music. He felt very similar to me. We decided to collaborate on a piece of music that expressed how we felt. Working remotely, my drummer, Jon Barnett, recorded drums over Steven’s original verse idea, and then sent the session on. I then overdubbed synthesisers and my chorus vocal. In the song’s chorus I describe my main concerns during lockdown, the hurt at possibly not seeing someone I loved ever again. This was added to Steven’s original verse idea, in which he describes his feelings during lockdown. I then sent the song on to my bass player Beau who overdubbed bass and lastly the song was sent to P-Dub, who added a very contemporary production soundscape and mixed the finished track without any of us ever meeting. The song and recording were a product of our lockdown experience and opened up new methods of working that I’d like to explore further in the future.

**Track 11 - Lyin bout who u sleep with**

This song wraps up the album by detailing my life’s journey by not ruthlessly exploiting ‘Cult Leader Tactics’. It details experiences and situations where I have fallen foul of manipulative behaviour and the song simply comes back to the conclusion I always return to throughout my life, that the only real answer in life is love. Sonically I play my acoustic guitar through an old cassette recorder to give my vocal space to breathe. I initially wanted a choir chanting the album’s conclusion ‘let there be love at the end of the day’ but lockdown prevented this, so I appealed to fans to record the end refrain on their phone and email it to me. We narrowed the entrants down to 266 choir members who finish my album off, making this song the most spiritual recording I have made to date.