



STAND STEADY

WHEN ALL AROUND YOU ARE GIVING UP ON THEIR DREAMS,
WHAT DO YOU DO?
WELL, YOU MAKE AN ALBUM LIKE PALM READER JUST DID.

WORDS
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PHOTOS
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stages, Andy proclaims this the next step in their third incarnation, one that began with the release of 'Braille' in 2018. That album saw Palm Reader shed their long-contested associations with the post-hardcore scene and endlessly lazy comparisons to The Dillinger Escape Plan. But to land on the sound they have since mastered on 'Sleepless', the band - completed by guitarist Sam Rondeau-Smith, bassist Josh Redrup and drummer Dan Olds - needed to battle through a particularly dark chapter in their story. "Everyone died," Andy bluntly recalls of the lead up to 'Braille'.

"We had a lot of bereavement in our family and friends, which clearly affected us in a way, consciously or not. It made us look at what we were doing and ask whether we carry on doing this."

Like many faced with the realities of grief, their priorities shifted dramatically, and although it found them toying with the idea of giving up, 'Braille' offered Palm Reader much needed catharsis.

"The mortality of life comes at you really fucking quick sometimes," Josh laments. "It makes you reassess what you are doing and the way you are doing it. That's what happened. We became adults, and more of a family as a band. We were looking after ourselves and each other, and just approaching things in a lot more of a mature way."

In going through such profound experiences, and in finding solace in their music, Palm Reader struck their own chord. With 'Sleepless', the band afforded themselves the freedom to build and grow, free from the constraints of overwhelming suffering. In songwriting, Josh has turned to others for inspiration, an obvious exhale of the demons that dominated the previous record.

"I'm a white male," he shrugs. "I don't need to sing my song. That's been sung."

In sound, 'Sleepless' wavers between their most explorative, atmospheric and, yes, miserable.

"There's definitely peaks and troughs throughout the whole record,"

Andy admits.

"Definitely some of the most jovial music we've ever made, but definitely some of the most miserable stuff I've ever written."

Throughout the last decade, Palm Reader have seen a vast number of their contemporaries come and go. Sharing festival bills with bands from across the globe, not least the cream of UK heavy music, vocalist Josh McKeown and guitarist Andy Gillen have watched their mates rise and rise before calling it a day. Consistently sandwiched in the middle of the line-up, Palm Reader have remained constant, revered by the underground and a regular grassroots fixture. Entering the new decade, having waved farewell to the very bands they shared stages with, the

five-piece are set to unleash their fourth studio album that might just change the status quo.

It's a milestone Josh isn't taking lightly. "With most bands, but especially bands that have little to no financial backing throughout the whole of their career, you just don't see it at all," he remarks sipping on a pint of Guinness, looking back on a run of records that on many occasions very nearly spelled the end for the band. The journey to 'Sleepless', their most expansive album to date, has not been an easy ride.

Crudely splitting their career into three

“THE MORTALITY OF LIFE COMES AT YOU REALLY FUCKING QUICK SOMETIMES”

JOSH McKEOWN



He pauses and laughs.

"It's just not like 'Braille', where we dipped our brush in misery..." Josh interjects.

"And painted a big, black picture." Drawing inspiration from unlikely sources, Josh and Andy give credit to the band's broad tastes and vastly different life experiences for their more focussed sound. It plays out in the consistent balance between ferocity and beauty, never settling on the tropes of the genre labels that have plagued the band since 2013's 'Bad Weather'. The chaos of their early material is redefined. "It's not just five blokes playing quickly and loudly at each other," Josh notes.

"It's unison and harmony. Misery and harmony at the same time."

To reach this point, the five members have had to face some harsh truths. Initially aspiring to the heights of stadium-fillers and festival headliners, it soon became evident that these accolades might not be in Palm Reader's future. Alongside finding harmony in their sound, they've also secured it in the way they approach the band. "The rose-tinted glasses of youth and the naivety that follows that have disappeared," Josh notes.

"I wouldn't say we're jaded. I wouldn't say we hate the industry. But I would say that we've definitely realised that in order to do this long term you have to be realistic about the possibilities for a band like ours. That's something we've had to come to terms with."

"It's a bitter pill to swallow," Andy agrees. Acknowledging the friends who have hung up their instruments along the way, he raises the fact that Palm Reader continue to weather the storm, even when the return of their key outlet - the live show - feels further and further away. "We know we aren't going to make any money from this, but we enjoy doing it, so we keep making music. As long as people want to hear it, we keep doing it," Andy continues.

"One thing somebody said to us quite recently was... the thing about us is that nobody has looked at us and thought we have overstayed our welcome. I find that reassuring."

Palm Reader have cemented their longevity by forging their own path, far from the fleeting trends that have crept into the mainstream.

"From the very beginning that's been a thing for us," Josh nods. "I remember sitting in the rehearsal space before we had written any songs talking about what we were looking to do, and what kind of

stuff we wanted to write. From that point on, we've always said we want to write the songs we wish we were listening to, that other bands aren't writing. That's exactly what we're doing now."

That path has seen Palm Reader consistently evolve and develop not just their sound but the very process of writing music. Their newfound comfort in their own skin mirrors their vibrant and assured sound.

"Rather than wanting what other people have, we're now happy with where we are," Andy says with a grin.

"We're carry on doing our own thing, forcing ourselves to swallow said bitter pill and to stay humble."

But they won't be getting complacent any time soon, that's for sure.

"I don't think there's a correlation between being happy and being complacent," Josh concludes. "You can take stock and ground yourself, and that's the same thing. You can still progress."

With that, 'Sleepless' emerges as the product of a band both assured and innovative; a step forward for one of Britain's most consistent bands.

Palm Reader's new album 'Sleepless' is due out on November 27 via Church Road Records.