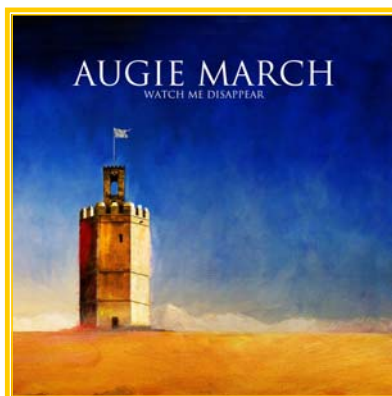


# AUGIE MARCH

## WATCH ME DISAPPEAR



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There's little about Augie March that could be called everyday. With singer Glenn Richards' distinctive voice, his sharp, literary lyrics and the band's off-kilter rock 'n' roll, the Melbourne band has created a niche for itself in the past 12 years, one that has brought multiple awards, taken it around the world and attracted an ever-increasing and loyal fan-base in Australia and beyond.

The world Richards has created for Augie March's fourth album, *Watch Me Disappear*, is certainly not everyday. Barbarians have breached its walls and are wallowing in the chaos. Muggers mug, killers kill, dragons with bulldog heads inhabit the pubs and a wealth of richly-drawn characters trade punches, kisses and everything in between. It's a place of extraordinary beauty too, a beauty that offers escape from the evil, from the anarchy -- from the everyday.

Outside of these walls, high in his lofty turret, sits Glenn Richards, songwriter extraordinaire, musing on it all with a sense of wonder, bewilderment and compassion. In so doing he has created 11 sumptuous vignettes, brought to life with his characteristic poetic sweep and the band's easy chemistry and rootsy sensibility.

Richards explains the lyrical currency of *Watch Me Disappear* as "the unravelling of the social contract that helps us maintain sophistication". That's at the heart of *City of Rescue*, Richards' take on an old Blind Willie Johnson tune, *I'm Gonna Run to the City of Refuge*. Drummer Dave Williams sets this runaway train song in motion with driving snare before it turns into a psychedelic hoedown at the gates of civilisation. There's a similar exploration of nirvana, Eden, heaven and hell on the soaring title track, where Richards ponders the significance of 'dousing a burning flag with a plate of oily water'.

*Watch Me Disappear* is an album where, for the first time, Richards' imagination has taken precedence over introspection.

"I consider that a step forward," he says. "That can still be quite moving, without there being any obvious personal motivation behind the tunes."

“I have to use my imagination because we've been doing this for 12 years and there are no new stories for me to tell from that point of view. In the past I've had to rely on some painful experience to infuse the song.”

You can hear this imagination at work on the stark acoustic folk ballad *The Slant*, a tragic tale of hard labour set in the pine forests of Huon Valley in Tasmania. So too on *Lupus*, where the geography shifts to the Dandenong Hills, a castaway looks down on the city below with a mixture of yearning and disdain: “If I could sink my teeth into the dreams of ordinary people,” he pines.

If this avenue of thought is a slight departure for Augie March after more than a decade together, so too was their approach to recording *Watch Me Disappear*.

The band teamed up with American producer Joe Chiccarelli (*The Shins*, *My Morning Jacket*, *Beck*), and between them they have fashioned an album that is the most direct of the band's career. It's lean more than mean, with melody and Richards' voice consistently to the fore.

It's what Williams calls their “transition record”.

“Glenn's injecting something new musically into it,” he says. “It's about trying to realise Glenn's vision of the songs and trying to inject a different feel to them that hasn't yet been explored.”

*Watch Me Disappear* is the mark of a band whose career is consistently in the ascendancy. Those who marvelled at the lyrical grace and musical majesty of Augie March's last album, the award-winning *Moo*, *You Bloody Choir*, will identify with the soaring choruses here of the instantly hummable *Pennywhistle* (the penny whistle motif lodges in your brain and stays there) and Richards' breezy ode to the Id, *Becoming Bryn*.

There's room for a dose of reality in the Augies' songlist, however. *Mugged By the Mob*, ironically one of the most beautiful tracks on the album, was inspired by the ugliness of Richards being mugged in a Melbourne street earlier this year.

“It was a Wednesday night on Brunswick St,” he recalls. “I was pulling money from an ATM. They were just waiting there behind us, 14 or 15 of them.”

Richards penned most of the songs at his home in Abbotsford. If he got stuck, a wander down to the Yarra River was enough to get the juices flowing.

“If I haven't done the whole thing in one great burst of energy, which sometimes happens, I'll go for a walk and I'll have the melody in my head,” he says. “If I'm doing it the right way I can finish the song by the time I get back to the house.”

Once Richards had completed the material, the band spent three weeks fine-tuning it in a Melbourne studio before departing for Neil Finn's studio in New Zealand, where they were joined by Chiccarelli.

After overdubs and vocals were done back in Melbourne, Richards joined Chiccarelli at the Mix Room in Los Angeles for mixing.

Such overseas recording commitments have been rare for Augie March thus far. Their journey

began in Shepparton, Victoria in 1996 where Richards, guitarist Adam Donovan and drummer Dave Williams had gone to school together.

Joined by friend Edmondo Ammendola on bass, Augie March released their first EP, Thanks For the Memes, on Ra Records (a subsidiary of BMG) in 1998 and followed it up with another EP, Waltz, which included one of the band's best-loved songs, Asleep in Perfection.

In 2000, the band added keyboards player Rob Dawson and released their debut album, Sunset Studies, to critical acclaim, if not huge sales. However the album, with songs such as There Is No Such Place and The Hole in Your Roof, alerted Australia to a band that was thinking outside of the square and whose singer was reading a few books as well.

As their momentum built, tragedy struck. In January, 2001, Dawson was killed in a car accident, causing the band to take time out.

Kiernan Box became the new keyboards player for the band's second album, Strange Bird, in 2002, an album that confirmed their credentials as a rock band with smarts as well as guts, one of few Australian acts existing somewhere outside the mainstream while on a major label.

When Moo, You Bloody Choir, was released by Sony BMG in 2006, it sparked 18 months of furious activity for the band. Accolades poured in at home, with the album winning them the Australian Music Prize in 2007. The album received four ARIA Award nominations, while the single One Crowded Hour topped the Triple J Hottest 100 in 2007 and was named song of the year at the APRA Awards later in the year.

Moo was also the album that finally brought Augie March critical acclaim and a swelling fan base in the United States. Four tours there in little over a year endeared them to new fans and critics, with Billboard calling the album 'a classic-sounding blend of dreamy, folk-influenced rock that is rich with imaginative lyricism'. Entertainment Weekly called them 'Australia's great pop rock hope'.

The band topped off this flurry of activity by supporting Crowded House on their reunion tour here late in 2007.

Now Augie March are looking forward to bringing the next installment of their adventure to the paying public, not only in Australia but throughout the world. It should mark another giant step in the march of one of Australia's most original and constantly evolving bands.

### **Watch Me Disappear - Augie March - The Breakdown.**

**Kiernan Box, keyboards:** the man of many parts on Watch Me Disappear. Aside from his customary piano and organ, Box can also be heard on accordion, harmonica, vibraphone, clavichord, synthesizers and electric piano. "We prepared more thoroughly this time," he says, "so there's more of a studied synthesis between the musicians; in the past there's often been a fair amount of chaos in the arrangements and performances."

**Dave Williams, drums:** After the Augies put a Latin phrase on the cover of Moo, You Bloody Choir (Cogito sumere potum alterum -- let's have another drink) Williams's father was inspired to send him a Latin phrase before the band went into the recording studio. "It was cor ad cor

loquitor, which is heart speaking to heart. I wrote it on a piece of paper and stuck it to my snare drum. It's about finding the truth in the music."

**Adam Donovan, guitar:** superstition had no place in Donovan's thinking for the album, but bad luck played a part. "Three weeks before recording I broke my collarbone," he says. "I fell off my bike. The main problem was I couldn't play leading up to recording." Of the album, he says it's "more of a pop record, in terms of Augie March anyway".

**Edmondo Ammendola, bass:** Ammendola believes the Augies can find a new audience with this album, although he's quite happy with the one they have already. "I'm not precious about maintaining one particular group of fans," he says. "People will prick up their ears at the immediate sound of this album, but there's only so much you can change about a band. It's still very much an Augie March album. I'm just looking forward to going out on the road with it."

**Glenn Richards, vocals, guitar, keyboards:** the singer is happy he has taken Augie March on a slightly different direction this time, musically and geographically. "I wanted to get us out of our comfort zone, so that's why we went to New Zealand and why we mixed in Los Angeles. And working with Joe was a new experience. He expects you to turn up and know your parts, so there's no messing around once you're in there."

Augie March are:

**Glenn Richards  
Adam Donovan  
Edmondo Ammendola  
David Williams  
Kiernan Box**

**Watch Me Disappear is in store through SonyBMG on October 11th 2008.**

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