



Margot & the Nuclear So And So's

Hybristophilia (*The Dust of Retreat* Rarities)

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B.

Waking up and Walking Out
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Richard Edwards: vocals, guitar, keys

Tyler Watkins: bass, vocals

Andy Fry: guitars

Chris Fry: drums

Emily Watkins: keys, vocals

Jessie Lee: cello, vocals

Ashley White: keys, vox (Cheap Motel Room)

*All songs written by Richard Edwards

(Mice & Margot Music, ASCAP)

**All songs recorded and mixed by Tyler Watkins

at Queensize Twin Aire

Mastered for vinyl by Tyler Watkins at Postal Recording

The Dust of Retreat

I didn't hear *The Dust of Retreat* until 2013 – eight full years after a small but mighty army were indoctrinated as Margot & the Nuclear So and So's followers. It was early in '13 when I met Richard Edwards, after I began working at the company that published his work. He was wrapping up writing a batch of tunes that would become *Slingshot to Heaven*... instantly I became pretty captivated with these new songs, and began to work with him as he recorded and compiled the record.

I knew a couple of Margot obsessed fans over the years, one in particular always used to give me the ol' “you would love this band” routine. For whatever reason, I never listened – never really gave it much of a thought. Most of the time when people told me that I would really love a band, I didn't. It's like being fixed up on a blind date... usually doesn't pan out like predicted.

The first Margot tune I ever heard was the demo for “Lazy,” and it knocked me on my ass. The roughs kept coming: “Hello, San Francisco,” “Los Angeles,” “I Don't.” Suddenly and intensely I had a new favorite songwriter, who also happened to be making what promised to be my new favorite record.

As luck would have it, Richard and I got along real well. We shared some odd musical obsessions (Louvin Brothers, ODB, Randy Newman), and began talking pretty exclusively about records we loved (he also has this obsession with movies that borders on the psychotic, but that's not important now). The thing that really hit me tho, was that Richard knew how to make records, I got that right away. This guy knew exactly what he wanted and he worked tirelessly (loudly complaining the whole way) to achieve what he heard in his brain. He recorded to tape, and sequencing was everything... he didn't settle for “good enough,” even when I was ready to.

I made the decision at some point that I would not listen to any previous Margot records until this record was finished. And I didn't. (The only exception being when I mentioned to the Old 97's Rhett Miller I had found this “new” writer that was killing me and he immediately whipped out his iPhone to play me “Broadripple is Burning,” which he had recently discovered).

Once *Slingshot* was finished I was ready to go backwards and hear Richard's past. I purposely listened backwards... I spent a lot of time with *Rot Gut*, *Domestic* before I journeyed through *Buzzard* and the *Animals*. Then, finally, I settled in with the record that I knew meant so much to that loyal group of OG fans.

I remember the first needle drop on *Dust*... I honestly wasn't expecting more than a little history lesson, at best... a little peak into the early years. “A Sea Chanty of Sorts” began and I just sat there, bewildered by this way-too-wise-for-his-years writer... the arrangement wasn't dated or childish or experimental, it was confident. I didn't get past that song for about a half hour, I kept getting up and resetting the tone arm of the turntable to the beginning. Finally, I let the song drift naturally into “Skeleton Key” and became even more transfixed. Rhett had once described Richard's lyrics as “fearless” – and I couldn't agree more: “Quiet as a Mouse,” “Jen is Bringing the Drugs,” “Dress Me Like a Clown,” “Barfight Revolution,” my brain was exploding. At this point I hated myself for not listening to that pal of mine who once urged me to listen to this band, and felt genuinely sad that I had missed out on this music for so long. And the shows! Jesus, I fucking hated myself.

The Dust of Retreat is that spectacular first film by your favorite director or actor. It's also an album that Richard himself can't acknowledge for the

work of art it is. He'll always think he could have written this part better or sang that part better, I assume. He's wrong, of course. He may never come to terms with the fact that Margot's introduction to the world is pretty fucking flawless, and totally deserving the loyalty it garnered.

Richard Edwards knows how to tell the story the right way—even if he puts you though hell on the journey to completion. When I met this music, I was ecstatic and knew I stumbled upon something really special. I would go along with him on this ride as long as he would have me.

When the idea of doing this box set came about, I asked Richard what he had in the area of oddities. I did not expect to get the half a terabyte hard drive that arrived... and I could not believe the treasures that existed. What I love most about this set is that it does not play like a nostalgic set of outtakes, but rather companion albums/long lost siblings of the sessions for each piece of work. Listen loudly.

Tom DeSavia

Publishing and record label A&R executive, co-host of the popular “Live from High Fidelity” podcast, and co-author (along with punk legend John Doe from X) of the forthcoming “Under the Big Black Sun: the True Story of LA Punk Rock” (DaCapo Press, 2016)

Painting (reverse side) by Stacy Novak | <http://stacynovakart.com>

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Hybristophilia (*The Dust of Retreat* Rarities)

Lost at Sea

*When I met Andy Fry, our first guitar player, it was a real thrill to finally come across someone older, who saw playing music as a way of life and not just a past time. I was 19 or 20, coming out of bands where the majority of the members treated music as a way to fill holes in their social schedule. Maybe now that seems like wisdom, but it infuriated me at the time. I couldn't understand why no one I knew was as driven (some people would have other adjectives for what I was) to write songs, make records, and go on tour. Meeting Andy and his brother Chris made me realize that there were other people like me in the world. It really was the first time I felt at home. Andy took this song to a couple big label A&R people he knew and it sort of started them liking me or thinking I had potential as a songwriter. I left it off **The Dust of Retreat** because these A&R people liked it, but it did score us a free flight, Times Square hotel room, and steakhouse dinner. Come *Animal/Not Animal*, those label dinners would become trips to the Hustler club in NY, then they'd pretty much dry up completely by Buzzard.*

Vampires in Blue Dresses ("525" basement demo)

*I spent most of my early music making at Tyler Watkins' shit hole Muncie Indiana basement. It was called the 525 house and rats actually came out of the sink once. A lot of the We are Hex kids lived there, maybe some of Everything, Now! It was sort of passed down from bands to younger bands every few years. I'd leave work or school and drive my overheating minivan there, record all night, and drive straight back to work/school. I'd sleep for a couple hours afterwards. We did a whole record in that basement before the first Margot record. I started going back to record these acoustic demos that would end up as **Dust** songs almost immediately after that album "came out", sometimes with Heidi Gluck. I don't think we knew there would be a Margot when these were being recorded.*

Lost on 49th St. (demo)

*Another song full of youthful passion, painted with the brush of others, about the kind of experiences I dreamt/read about but had not yet lived. Years later, after actually being lost in NY many, many, many times, my songs about the experience(s) would be significantly less sentimental. This one was probably for the record we thought we'd make after the **I Was an Astronaut** record (pre-**Dust**), but then made the contenders list for what became **Dust**. Sounds much more like *Astronaut* than **Dust**.*

Somewhere the City Lights Leave Us Blind

*One of several songs left unfinished that were superior to many that made the album. We recorded **Dust** from about 8 PM to 6 AM. We'd show up in town and drink beer at some frog themed bar, then start working and pretty much go all night. Tyler had a girlfriend who would spit tequila into my mouth when we got tired and yell, "baby bird!". A lot of the record started this way, just a couple guitars and drums, and we meant to keep 'em like that mostly. Just kept growing when we'd invite someone in to do a little part or two. Next thing you know, we were like a 12 piece band . We should've finished this one, but we had no money.*

The Stench of Love

With a good vocal (not this scratch shit) and another good guitar part, this might've been the best song on the record. Actually an almost decent lyric, which is tough to come by in this era. I remember feeling into this one when I wrote it. One of the last songs written for the record with "Sea Chanty" and maybe "Bookworm". Wish we'd had the money to finish this one.

Waking up and Walking Out

The only completely finished song that didn't end up on the record. Kind of a neat production, with all (or most) of the instrumentation sort of being there for a reason. There was something about what Andy, Tyler, and myself could pull off from a production standpoint every now and then. I've still yet to hear anything else that really sounds like it for better or worse. We could also chase our tails endlessly.

I Was Drunk (demo)

Must've just discovered liquor or something.

Cheap Motel Room

*Maybe the first official "Margot" recording, even though most of those cats aren't on it. It was the first thing Tyler and I did as an intended piece of whatever was to follow up the *Astronaut* record. Would've probably gone further down this road if I hadn't met the other Margot folks. This was basically what happened when Tyler and I put our emo-pop heads together when we were little. A lot of the percussion was us beating the hell out of folding chairs with metal baseball bats. Tyler was real into that kinda shit because of Fugazi or something.*

On a Freezing Chicago Street ("525" basement demo)

*I played this demo for my friend Ashley and she said it sounded like Journey or some band. We lived in a little apartment on Compton street where we learned to be bad. Our other roommate tricked me into thinking the basement was better than the upstairs bedroom I lived in so I traded him and ended up sleeping on a concrete floor with spiders and mold for a year while he enjoyed my room. In protest, my friend Joe and I threw the TVs down the stairs and they sounded like bombs and almost got us kicked out of our apartment. We swung a DVD player into them over and over again by its cord. We made a trash mural out of the busted TV's and made 2K sit in it whenever he came down to gloat about his clever room swap. I wrote all of the **Dust** record in that basement.*

Avalanche

Lots of longing in this one, geez Louise.

Things You Shouldn't Do (demo)

*Despite the dopey singing, this one contains the germ of a good song. Basically written just past the cutoff for **Dust**, but more like that record than the *Animal* stuff. Right after this, really fast, I came up with "Broadripple," "Tall as Cliffs," "Holy Cow," "A Children's Crusade on Acid," and "Hip, Hip Hooray," and it seemed like those would be what the next record would be like, and that we'd probably make it really soon after **Dust**.*