



Margot & the Nuclear So And So's

Dark Energy in the Spotlight (*Rot Gut, Domestic Rarities*)

A.

You Ain't Afraid of the Devil (Clava)
Fingertips
Payphone
Coonskin Cap (demo)
Don't Bug Me, I'm Drinkin' (demo)
Something in the Way

B.

All Through the Night
Why Would I Go Outside? (Clava)
Blinkin' Fuzz
Broadripple is Burning (featuring Lily & Madeleine)
Jesus Breaks Your Heart (demo)

Richard Edwards: vocals, guitars, keys
Tyler Watkins: bass, vocals
Ronnie Kwasman: guitars
Vess Ruhtenberg: guitars
Devon Ashley: drums
Cameron McGill: keys, guitars, vocals
Chris Fry: drums on "Payphone", "Something in the Way"
Lily & Madeleine: vocals on "Broadripple is Burning"
Heidi Gluck: vocals
Kristen Reilly: vocals

*All songs written by Richard Edwards
(Mice & Margot Music, ASCAP) except:
"Something in the Way" by Kurt Cobain
"All Through the Night" by Jules Shear
**All songs recorded by Tyler Watkins except:
"Fingertips"—recorded by John Congleton
"You Ain't Afraid of the Devil" and
"Why Would I Go Outside"—recorded by Neil Strauch
Recorded at Clava, Electrical Audio,
Queensize Twin Aire, and Richard's apt
Mastered for vinyl by Tyler Watkins at Postal Recording

Rot Gut, Domestic

I met Richard through Joel Mark, the manager of Margot at the time, who I believe I met through my friends in the Texas band Midlake, who he also managed. I only had a passing understanding of what Margot was about at the time. I liked em, I do admit I sort of qualified them as maybe a little bit of that part of the early oughts that I kinda remember as the "maximum rock orchestras" phase: The Polyphonic Spree, Arcade Fire, Broken Social Scene are a few that come to mind. Everyone was putting more people on stage, sometimes to great effect, other times serving as a distraction to the fact there maybe wasn't an amazing song happening there. But hey, "we are having fun".

But Margot had songs.

I don't exactly recall at what point I realized we weren't making a record anything like that. I just remember being delighted to see the guitars were being made to be huge unapologetically. To hell with thinning out to make space for a zillion other doo dads.

I remember the basic tracking of the record blasting by in what seemed a couple days, the band was hungry and aggressive like they let a wild boar out of a cage that had been tethered to ornate instrumentation. It was impressively blistering. If you can't hear that voracity so clearly on "Prozac Rock," "Arvdas Sabonis," and "Disease & Tobacco Free," you aren't paying attention or don't have ears.

The music wasn't the only thing that was hungry and unhinged. I remember driving with the band from Chicago to Indianapolis after the basic tracks to finish up at the band's studio when the van broke down. It was ungodly hot. Like Africa hot. We rented a Uhaul and all of us rode in the front together. Since nobody had a car, and the band decided to stay at the studio, I drove the behemoth Uhaul to my hotel those nights—a Red Roof Inn, which was in the most unforgivable area of downtown Indianapolis, peopled with methheads, jugglalos, and your basic rats in human clothing. The hallways smelled of old condoms and amphetamine smoke. I can honestly say it was one of the most harrowing hotel experiences I've had... and I've had a few.

There was a sincere danger to making this record. It's the sound of people teetering over into the malaise of their 30s. A rope tug of domestic life and the destructive highlife. The analogs and metaphors of that in making the record are so crystalline to me, now years later.

On the morning of the 4th of July, while trying to find a doctor to treat my unending case of strep throat, I embarked with the Uhaul an epic game of "dodge" with the most desperate and sad Indianapolis city folk imaginable. Only then, after the day's session, to spend that evening watching fireworks with Richard's lovely daughter, wife, mother and father... all of which I have the most tender memories of as the most kind and unassuming people. Extremes.

After finishing the record I remember filling up on shitty eggrolls and jumping on a megabus with Ronnie (the incredible guitarist) back to Chicago where I started another record with a French band that was much more placid and unmemorable.

The recording was just like the record... a long dark gaze into the extremes of life. I dig it.

John Congleton

*Grammy award winning producer and engineer.
Produced, engineered, and mixed Rot Gut, Domestic*

"All Through The Night" - Cyndi Lauper
By Jules Shear / Songs of Universal Inc. o/b/o Juters Music (BMI)

"Something In The Way" - Nirvana
By Kurt D Cobain / BMG Rights Management UK Limited
o/b/o The End of Music LLC (SESAC)

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

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You Ain't Afraid of the Devil (Clava)

After the tour for *Buzzard*, which had it's ups and downs (putting it rather lightly), I went to southern California to stay with my family for a few weeks. Yet another period of no money and fear that we'd pretty much been forgotten and everyone hated our new record set in. I sat in a hot tub for a couple weeks wondering what to do next. We'd parted ways with our manager and my ongoing stomach pain issues had taken a really gnarly turn, which would be the new normal, with a few exceptions, for the next several years. A couple weeks into my California stay, Greg Dull's person called me out of the blue and let me know that he would like us to open for their Dynamite Steps tour. Chris was ecstatic. He was an Afghan Whigs maniac. I'd liked what I heard, but maybe I was a couple years too young for when it was hitting the radio. I remember Andy Fry telling the story of how, as a little kid, he ran into his mom's bedroom and yelled, "MOM! Did you know Paul McCartney had a band before Wings??" That's how I feel about Twilight Singers now. Love me some Whigs, but that Twilight Singers shit I heard every night for a month is my jam. It was a powerful band and we've maybe never gotten along quite so well with another group on a tour. The month was beautiful and we got to bang out our beloved *Buzzard* for a crowd who had shown up to have their ears abused. That's what we wanted. We wanted to be filthy. The support and generosity of Greg and those guys really pushed us to get right back on the horse. When we got back to Chicago we began working out the few songs I had in the Califone guys' now sadly defunct studio, Clava. I left after a couple months, heading back to California to finish writing a batch of songs so we could make a dang record.

Fingertips

Because we recorded *Gut* so quickly after *Buzz*, while there are a great deal of recordings from the era, there aren't a ton of *Rot Gut* era compositions that didn't end up on the record. Basically wrote an album's worth of songs and change and then recorded it in 9 days. Our former manger, who was gentleman enough to still be my homie, suggested Congleton, and it came through that he wanted to do it. Talked to him on the phone and he patiently reassured me we could cut the whole thing in 9-10 days. One of the hardest workers I've ever met. Loves Dr. Pepper.

Payphone

For a long time this was our most popular unreleased song. Maybe it still is, or maybe people have forgotten about it. Staple of the *Animal* era tours. Had to raise money to make the record so we finally recorded it for a fan funding campaign. It is a song well suited for Margot 2.0. Chris is killer on it. Ended up breaking it back out during shows on the *Gut* tour, which was a much, much better tour than the *Buzz* one. We were locked in by then, and my health had taken a brief upswing. That tour was great.

Coonskin Cap (demo)

During the writing of *Gut* it became obvious that we couldn't afford to continue living in Chicago. Engine had closed, leaving Brian working at various studios around town. Engine had sort of been

our spiritual home. Lots of things were changing. I went to Iowa with my wife and kid to visit her family and try to process moving for the billionth time. They bought me a coonskin cap at some shop. Still not totally sure why, but it was nice. This seems to be one that kids like from this record. I remember when we recorded it we were all trying to make a recording that sounded like the theme song to something like Dawson's Creek.

Don't Bug Me, I'm Drinkin (demo)

Title taken from a parent's offhand remark to her kid in "Streetwise", one of my favorite movies. A proper *Rot Gut* era song that actually made it into pre-production at Clava, but missed the actual sessions. Think Tyler wanted to do this one, but I could be mistaken.

Something in the Way

Got asked to cover this by some dude for his Nirvana comp. Did it in Tyler's apartment. Probably pissed off people who really love that band.

All Through the Night

A cover we did when I moved into my rental house in Indiana. Trying to get it in a TV show or something. I love the line, "we have no past." I could sing it over and over and over again. Might be the most beautiful four words in a song ever.

Why Would I Go Outside? (Clava)

This one is emblematic of the kind of record we were trying to make. A real flash blast of mania. The recording was like that, too. Slept in the warehouse studio, didn't see the sun for 7 days. John stayed in a real crackhouse motel, if memory serves. Legitimately nearly assaulted at least once. Poor guy. There was no money.

Blinkin' Fuzz

Probably the best of the unused *Rot Gut* songs. Should've been recorded. Not sure why it wasn't. Probably thought we already had enough slow songs.

Broadripple is Burning! (Featuring Lily & Madeleine)

As soon as our Epic re-record clause expired we recorded this version so we'd own one free and clear. Breaking Bad had attempted to license a great deal of *Animal* for their second season, but the label felt the money was insufficient and turned them down. Yep. Obviously not a *Rot Gut* tune, but recorded right at the end of that and a glimpse of what kind of sound we were about to move towards.

Jesus Breaks Your Heart (demo)

I'm fond of the Devil into Christ ending. I'm actually really fond of the whole record. Not many quirks and definitely our most 'anything goes' album. Partially due to how quickly it was written and recorded. I would like to do more records like that. It's nice to take the hands off the wheel every now and then. Probably our least popular album (which is saying something) but I get emails on occasion from kids who are over the moon for it. Always makes me smile.