

BIO // BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE // FORGIVENESS ROCK RECORD



Album: ***Forgiveness Rock Record***

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So yeah, it's been five years since the last Broken Social Scene album, but it also hasn't. In the time that's elapsed since the release of 2005's self-titled opus, we were more than tided over by the 2007 release of founding member Kevin Drew's solo album, *Spirit If...*, followed a few months later by co-founder Brendan Canning's own solo set, *Something for All of Us* — both of which were released under

the "Broken Social Scene Presents" banner, both of which were supported by tours that featured career-spanning setlists, and both of which featured pretty much the same group of players you hear on this new BSS release, *Forgiveness Rock Record*. In hindsight, Broken Social Scene's period of supposed inactivity was arguably their most productive stretch yet — yet another contradiction that makes up the byzantine BSS myth.

So even now — some 10 years after Drew and Canning first started laying down ambient instrumentals in a Toronto basement for their debut BSS release *Feel Good Lost* — that eternal question still lingers: what exactly makes a Broken Social Scene album a Broken Social Scene album?

For some, it's that omnipresent element of randomness and chaos — which is a fine theory and all, except *Forgiveness Rock Record* was approached on arguably the most stable footing the band has ever had, built as it was around the core 2007-08 touring line-up of Drew, Canning, drummer Justin Peroff and guitarists Andrew Whiteman, Charles Spearin and Sam Goldberg. For others, Broken Social Scene is defined by trippy, triple-guitar jams that slowly erupt into moments of brass-blasted rapture — but while that observation may be supported by *Forgiveness Rock Record*'s epic opener "World Sick," it doesn't explain the manic, string-stabbed berserker pop of "Chase Scene," or the breezy, space-age-bachelor-pad swing of "Art House Director." And then there are those who say the Broken Social Scene sound is the result of producer Dave Newfeld's psychedelic studio magic; however, for *Forgiveness Rock Record*, the band decamped to Soma Studios in Chicago and Giant Studio in Toronto to work with one of their heroes, Tortoise/Sea and Cake drummer John McEntire, who punched holes in the textural haze and coaxed the band into delivering their most assertive, forthright performances to date. For a band that once sang "it's all gonna break" like it was a self-fulfilling prophecy, Broken Social Scene has never sounded more together.

Forgiveness Rock Record thus marks a clean break from the narrative that began with 2001's modest *Feel Good Lost*, accelerated rapidly with the international breakthrough of 2002's *You Forgot It In People* and then was nearly derailed with 2005's tumultuous self-titled release, recorded at a time when the band was flush with sudden success, but struggling to find the right tour-life/home-life balance. As the title not-too-subtly indicates, *Forgiveness Rock Record* is about making amends for past mistakes, and songs like "World Sick" (set amid "a minefield of wounded affection") and the urgent rocker "Forced to Love" carry traces of the self-titled album's interpersonal anxieties. But primarily, the mood is one of acceptance and moving on — and, by extension, of coming to terms with the differences between the Broken Social Scenes of 2002 and 2010. That resident sirens Emily Haines, Feist and Amy Millan share the billing on "Sentimental X's" speaks to their more limited involvement in Broken Social Scene as they tend to their own bands and careers, and the repeated lyrics about "a friend you used to call" underscores the sense of relationships drifting apart. Yet the song's accelerated tempo reflects the beauty and the thrill in moving

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forward on separate paths, coupled with the reassurance that “off and on is what we want.” Conversely, the showcase of singer Lisa Lobsinger on perhaps the album’s most thematically resonant track, “All to All,” is a testament to the valuable role she’s played as the band’s regular on-tour vocalist since 2005, and the role she’ll continue to play in forging the band’s future.

But as Drew is careful to note at pretty much every concert Broken Social Scene plays, this is not about them; “we do this for you.” *Forgiveness Rock Record* doesn’t linger on the idea of redemption as a way to talk about their pasts, but to inspire you to let go of your own baggage and carry on — a philosophy best exemplified by centerpiece track “Romance to the Grave,” which sees Drew anxiously trading verses with The Sea and Cake’s Sam Prekop, before the song is cast out on a wave of heavenly harmonies, translating tension into ecstasy. That sense of liberation and exhalation is felt throughout *Forgiveness Rock Record*, be it in the form of charming disco-pop confections like “Texico Bitches” (featuring guest vocals from Pavement’s Spiral Stairs), the group-march fanfare of “Meet Me in the Basement” or the joyous drunk-rock hoedown “Water in Hell.”

“It’s the year 2010!” Canning excitedly declares on the latter track, effectively casting aside all the drama and uncertainty — not just for his own band’s sake, but for anyone itching for a second chance or clean slate. What ultimately makes *Forgiveness Rock Record* a quintessential Broken Social Scene album is not a matter of who produced the record or who plays on what song, but how the emotions and sentiments expressed within resonate through your own lives and loves.

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