

# Enter Shikari Unlocks Possibilities Within An Unrecognizable World

By **Murjani Rawls** - Apr 17, 2020



Photo Credit: Tom Barnes

If there is one way that you can describe British rock band, **Enter Shikari** throughout their 17-year history is that change is constant and almost welcomed. We are currently living in a time where the meaning of the word change seems to take on a new meaning daily. Sometimes minute by minute. Their seventh album, *Nothing Is True & Everything Is Possible* is a snapshot of all the plentiful possibilities that their music has explored. Sometimes pieces of music arrive at the right time to remind us of things that we can't see through the fog of grief. It can serve as a temporary escape. While the world in totality is undergoing an extreme transformation due to COVID-19, the exploratory DNA of *Nothing Is True* is here to remind us that anything is possible.

Lead singer/programmer **Rou Reynolds** is aware of the current times that we live in. He has an introspective intelligence about him that makes you ponder things beneath the surface. While many places are under lockdown, the new offering from Enter Shikari provides the listener 15 worlds to escape. I spoke to **Reynolds** about the ambitious nature that permeates their new album and how his world view has changed since we last spoke four years ago.

We talked back in 2016 for [Mind Equals Blown](#) when you were on the Minesweeper tour. That talk was on the precipice of so many things changing. The U.S. election didn't happen yet amongst so many other things in the world. Four years later, it's almost not recognizable for better or worse – we'll just say. I just wanted to see where you are mentality and how your world view has changed.

The main theme of the album is of possibility. If the last five years have been anything, it's just proven that so many things that we didn't think were possible quite clearly are. It feels like our sense of normality is constantly being challenged. Not just challenged, but destroyed. What we're going through now is hopefully a once-in-a-lifetime event. It seems like one thing after another that yeah the last few years have been intense.

I look at it in terms of the album title, *Nothing Is True and Anything Is Possible*. We exist in a time where you have to parse out the things that you see and hear for truth. In a time where our normal is being torn apart by COVID-19, maybe there's something better than where we were. There's a lot of musical freedom in this album where it meets the moniker of 'anything is possible.' It perhaps where Enter Shikari is now and we, as a society can go once this is all over. A way of life that works for everybody.

I think it could go two ways we might come out of this. It will be a fight just to get things back or as close to where they were. At the moment, everyone's livelihood has been affected. Many people don't have a job anymore or they've been furloughed. If you're working at a supermarket, your shifts have just gone through the roof. Everyone's lob normality is just disappeared. The scare is that it'll be such a wrench to get companies back up and running again and get that sense of normality back. We might overlook the fact that we need to use this basically as a dress rehearsal.

This virus, in the grand scheme of things, is nowhere near as bad as it could be, you know? If this was an avian flu with a 60% death rate, we'd be looking at a species changing event. Civilization would change in a matter of weeks or possibly be destroyed in that same amount of time. So, in a sense, we're quite lucky that the current Coronavirus has like such a small row number of base reproduction rates. It could be so much worse and one will come along that will be so much worse at some point soon.

We have to look at this as a wake-up call in so many ways. We have to look at our health care. We have to look at neoliberalism as a whole, you know? It just makes so little sense. We have to look at how almost all the problems we have; whether it be viruses, climate change, antibiotic resistance, resource depletion, etc. They are global issues and need to be faced globally. There needs to be a much bigger sense of global unity. This has to be the wake-up call. It's unite or die, literally.

**You produced the new album and it touches on all the musical themes the band has done so far. From *Take It To The Skies* to *The Spark*. How important was that for you to make this like album as eclectic as possible and draw from so much of your previous history?**

That was one of the real conscious decisions right from the start of making this album. Usually, we go into an album and I'll just sort of write without an intentional direction or plan. The plan will evolve with the creative process as it goes along. With this one, there were a few things that were real, considered points. One of them to make sure that the palette that we were using was as broad as we could make it. That's something that we've built up over time with each album. We built a bit more confidence. We go into areas that we haven't gone before and we feel more comfortable.

We are using such a breadth of instrumentation and conveying emotions that we didn't think we'd perhaps be able to convey properly years ago. With everything we've learned, we felt now was the time. One of the most important things to us was to make an album that showed our musical agility. Musical agility is something that we pride ourselves on. We were lucky to grow up with all sorts of influences. Rory [Clewlow], our guitarist, his brother was a German bass DJ. My dad was a Motown and northern soul DJ. My nan got me into big band jazz. My mom was into classical. My local hardcore punk scene was massively influential. My uncle was into acid house and everything that came out of Chicago.

I had all of this from an early age. That then made me want to leap into creating music that would have a real width to it.

One of my favorite parts of the album is the interludes. There's 'Modern Living' and then 'apocaholics anonymous in a B minor' comes back around and plays on some of the themes. I've seen the band live a few times and you have spots where you'll play around with those remixes. There are full orchestral parts as well. Within the 15 songs, they sound like an album within an album. I thought that was pretty cool.

Yeah, I think a lot of it is just making sure that our desire to explore is satiated with the music that we're making. One minute, I'll get enthused and want to make a two-minute electronic remix of what the track following 'Modern Living' is. The next day, I'll want to conduct an orchestra. As I was saying before, we're lucky enough to have all these influences for an early age. So, I feel fairly comfortable in different areas of musical production. It just keeps it exciting, you know. Life is massively varied and the emotions we feel on day to day basis, let alone a year of our lives, are massively varied.

I think we should produce something that's in line with our lives. I don't think we could ever be a doom metal band or something. Of course, sometimes we feel morbid and angry, but that's not all that life is. Just on the other hand, we could never be like a pop group because I feel more than just saccharin diluted emotions, you know?

I read that you didn't want *Nothing Is True..* to be a 'gloomy metal album.' As a whole, it's very upbeat. There's almost an escapism to it given the orchestral parts. 'The Dreamer's Hotel' touches on a musical bliss, if you will. It's almost like you're encouraging us to dance through all the pain.

I think our music has always had an upbeat nature to it. Even with our last album, *The Spark*, which was written a period full of hardship for me. It was definitely the most intense period of my life in terms of the bad things that I had to deal with. That album came out with a lot of upbeat tunes to it. Part of me doesn't even know why that happens. I think it's must be in my nature. Perhaps it was the fact that I was brought up around so much Motown and northern soul that always had this positive, 'get up and dance your woes away' feeling to it. Maybe that's just embedded in me.

I think there's also another thread here. Which is that music is innately a thing that brings us together. It's a tool that unites humanity and indiscriminately which is the important thing. Lots of things bring us together. We have shared interests. Things like religion congregate people together, but it is discriminate. Whereas with music, you go to the modern music festival and in the middle with a lot of people a shared experience. A connection through an art form.

Music is intrinsically hopeful. It always fills me with hope when you can have those moments where you feel connected to other human beings. That is kind of beautiful. I think the music we make will always have that experience within it. It's just something that we know so well now. We're so grateful for that.

Going off that point, music is an uniter, but we're in an instance where we can't be together physically right now. Once this album is released, it's just going to be a collective listening experience for the time being. Does that make you feel that more excited to get back to playing these live shows, hopefully starting in November?

I think by the end of this year, if our shows in November go ahead, there's going to be a feeling of euphoria that we've never felt before. No one is going to need to take any drugs. Let's just put it that way. This is going to be a real wild sense of freedom and community within the walls of the venues. Not just with our shows either. I think any gig is going to have that. Also, I feel there will be a sense of gratitude for being able to do this again, you know? I think that it's gonna give all of us some amazing experiences that we're looking forward to. As we both know, it's difficult to predict when that is going to happen. Hopefully sooner than later.

'The King' deals with this king-of-the-hill mentality. Once you have the crown, somebody is always trying to take it away from you. Things are tense. Even with 'The Great Unknown', and you're contemplating, "is this a new beginning or is this the end?" With the current series of conundrums we are living in, it could go either way. What do you feel is the most important thing that we as humans can take away from this massive, shared experience?

I think the most important thing is that it's showing us or should I say, reminding us is that we are all part of one super organism. If you step far enough back, every living thing on this planet is related to one massive ecosystem. With our species, we get so caught up in our own individual lives and problems; both from a country and an internal standpoint. Just by the way this virus travels, if just by doing the actions of isolation, the lock downs, the being away from others; it

stops the virus in its tracks. You can think of that as the virus getting into a body and trying to get from one organ to another. You, as a person could be that the thing that joins those organs together. If you take yourself out of society and self-isolate, you're stopping that virus in its tracks.

We are all apart of this one big organism. That sort of perspective is so rarely thought about. Life gets to be so fast, busy, and difficult. It's hard enough paying the bills and looking after families. All those kinds of things. It's difficult to grapple with concepts because they're so colossal. Just thinking about the whole of humanity. However, I think things like that are just so important. It just puts everything into perspective. It shows that the problems that we have are all global. We need to address them together and we need to stop this.

'The Dreamers Hotel' is all about this. This kind of uncharitable, taking everything in bad faith. Kind of like the way we converse and approach each other. We try to catch each other out all the time and make party politics the central theme of everything. Second-guessing what everyone thinks just based on their ideological labels when need to start learning how to have respectful, calm, patient conversations again. I think that's the only way we're going to go forward by dropping this nasty, bitter, or uncharitable attitude atmosphere. It's not just on social media, but it seems to be all over the globe at the moment. That's understandable because things are so tense and we're all struggling so much. It's going to take awareness of how we act and knowing that, it's possible to talk differently to each other.

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