



WANDERLUST



TORA

patagonia

GHOST IN THE MACHINE

IT KIND OF GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT BOB VYLAN'S NEW ALBUM 'BOB VYLAN PRESENTS THE PRICE OF LIFE' IS SOMETHING WORTH LISTENING TO, IN ABSOLUTELY EVERY SENSE. HERE IS ITS STORY.

WORDS
BEN TIPPLE

PHOTOS
DEREK BREMNER

“It could be worse,” Bobbie laughs in one of a handful of upbeat moments that cut through an otherwise sobering conversation.

“People could ask us how we get our hair so big,” Bobby jumps in with a grin that rarely leaves his face.

The two members of the highly charged powerhouse that is Bob Vylan are in the middle of discussing the themes on their new album, ‘Bob Vylan Presents The Price Of Life’, the furious follow-up to their unfiltered ‘We Live Here’ debut. Taking a break from the damnation of misplaced power dynamics, institutional bigotry and financial inequality, Bobby proudly holds up a popular guitar magazine he recently spoke to.

“We love music,” he says.

“We are musicians.”

Last time out, ‘We Live Here’ placed Bob Vylan on the map entirely on their own terms. Although the powerful attack on institutional and societal racism was largely overlooked by the music industry elite, the response inspired drummer Bobbie and vocalist and guitarist Bobby (who welcomes being called Bob for ease) to set up their own label, Ghost Theatre. Their ethos remains simple; Bob Vylan look to use their growing success to support other artists with a message that’s overlooked by the mainstream. Artists keep their rights to their music, are offered the chance to be successful, and make money doing so. “You can keep your message unfiltered,”

Bob explains.

“It doesn’t have to be tampered with.”

It’s a natural continuation of Bob Vylan’s trajectory, rising outside of the corporate machine. It also means that duo themselves don’t have to hold back at all. The fury that underpinned ‘We Live Here’ carries through to ‘...The Price Of Life’, and tracks like ‘Pretty Songs’ lay the cards firmly on the table.

“*Black lives have always mattered*,” Bob spits, “*you were just never told so on TV*.” He charges, “*I’m smashing fists at every racist prick I meet*.”

Any misguided suggestion that the pair may have had to tone things down is long gone. They even laugh at the idea of mainstream radio plays.

“We think it’s hilarious,” Bob grins.

“It’s just not going to happen. We aren’t going to bother doing a clean version of these things, that’s bonkers.”

Through such unrestrained power and poignancy, Bob Vylan are well underway and forging a rousing community, and with high profile support slots including The Offspring and Biffy Clyro, their message is being heard by countless fresh ears. As active instigators of change, conversations around the band rightfully lean into their stories, their recounting of bigotry and hatred, and their innate ability to provide the soundtrack for the social and political zeitgeist. But as both Bob and Bobbie talk through their craft, it’s clear that the creative process drives them as much as

their message.

“It frustrates the fuck out of us,” Bob states bluntly, speaking of any separation between their activism and their music.

“I don’t know why we can’t talk about both. All those influences that you grow up on, internalise, interpret and spew back out, it’s nice when people recognise that. It’s why I get incredibly frustrated when somebody calls me ‘the rapper’. There are people that dedicate their lives to that one craft, and I don’t do that. That’s not my role in the band.”

It’s a sign of how easy it is for the artist to be separated from the artist. In the same vein, both members of Bob Vylan routinely face expectations that they are frustrated, difficult people.

“You get that a lot,” Bobbie notes.

“People always assume that’s what we are like 24/7, walking around angry at everything all the time. They meet us and we aren’t like they assume we’ll be. We are just normal people at the end of the day.” “You always have to be careful about the setting [in which] you get your message across,” Bob agrees.

“If you want to get your message out there, you pick the places you do that. You pick the places you are going to be visually passionate, otherwise you are just screaming about it in Tesco and somebody will call you crazy. We get our message out when we get our message out.”

With this new album, that message has broadened. ‘The Price Of Life’ turns its



“WHEN THERE’S BLOOD
IN THE STREETS,
SOMEBODY IS GETTING
RICH OFF THAT”



attention to the issue of money, “the root of all evil,” Bob grins.

“Essentially, somebody is getting rich off everything. When there’s blood in the streets, somebody is getting rich off that.”

Much like ‘We Live Here’ foreshadowed the 2020 protests, the record written some time before its release, ‘...The Price Of Life’ lands as households are squeezed by rising energy bills and food prices. Buying a house has rapidly become reserved for the elite, and poorer households are being priced out of so much in day-to-day life.

“It’s not a communist manifesto or anything like that,” Bob notes.

“It’s a very real-world, real-person narration about that struggle. Somebody is

controlling the purse strings in all aspects of life.”

“There are many instances where people are forced to do some wild things to make money, and those things can go wrong,” Bob says. “What a predicament to be in in the first place, and nobody is asking why it’s happening.”

This reoccurring and often challenging thread is one of many that runs through the record, pulling together the album’s various stylistic influences.

Stepping away from the capitalism-driven core of the music industry has allowed Bob Vylan to forge a space in which they can openly challenge the system, and Ghost Theatre means they live or die on a hill of their own creation.

“The only people to answer to are the people receiving the music,” Bobby notes.

“As long as they like it and as long as we are getting out what we need to, it doesn’t matter after that.”

With the freedom to deliver their message through an artform they so evidently love, and with a rapidly growing community hanging on every word, Bob Vylan are striving for active change.

“If the biggest pop star on the planet announces a secret show on a random street, you better believe there will be hundreds of thousands of people there,” Bob concludes on the intent of their music. “Well, why can’t we do a similar thing with a political or social agenda?”

‘Bob Vylan Presents The Price Of Life’ is out on April 22 via Ghost Theatre. They are due to tour the UK in May.