

 [Holy Doom by Demob Happy](holy-doom-by-demob-happy.html) Reviewed by [Andrew Marsden](writers.html#andrew-marsden) March 2018

Brighton based (but Newcastle formed) band Demob Happy's second album, *Holy Doom*, is their first album as a three-piece, following the departure of lead guitarist Matthew Renforth in 2016. Although the band may have reduced in number, they most certainly have not reduced the impact of their scuzzy-grunge-psych rock.

Opener *Liar in Your Head* opens with a barrage of sound and vocals before a chugging guitar riff kicks in. *Adam Godfrey* certainly earns his crust with his guitar work. Halfway through the song, the bass of *Matthew Marcantonio* locks in with the drums of *Thomas Armstrong* and Beatles-esque vocalisations filter through the song before a brief punky drumming and vocal combo introduces the final third of the song. With the song ebbing and flowing from hard rock to psychedelic overtones, listeners would be forgiven for thinking that when Marcantonio sings *There's a liar in your head* he was directly addressing them!

*Be Your Man* follows with a vibe akin to American hard rock outfit Black Country Communion. *What's good for you is bad for me*, intones Marcantonio, the lyric flagging up a key concern throughout the album: duality and the dichotomy of good and evil. The album's title juxtaposes as much, as does the music within: dirty, heavy guitar lines compete against the kind of harmonised backing vocals you'd find on a Beach Boys album.

The album's lead single *Loosen It* drips with a sense of real menace both lyrically and musically. The guitar riffs are as thick as tar and the lyrics are just as dark: *I want to feel something more/Tell me that thing you're dying for*. If you like your music to rock but quietly provoke a feeling of existential dread, this song delivers in spades.

*Fake Satan* is a funkier, glam-inspired cut and gives an insight into what Marc Bolan might be recording had he not tragically died so young. The song boasts a guitar solo worthy of the work Mick Ronson did on David Bowie's *Aladdin Sane* album (it instantly recalls *The Jean Genie*). A strong contender for a single release. The following song, *Runnin' Around*, gives Armstrong the chance to quietly keep time on the drums before pounding them for dear life in the chorus. The song recalls the *quiet-loud* music from the early to mid-1990s, going as it does from quiet introspection to hard rocking chorus sections.

*I Wanna Leave (Alive)*, with its key changes, is like the bastard offspring of Frank Zappa's *Mothers of Invention* and the song *Feel the Pain* by The Damned. On this track, more than any other, Marcantonio gets to really flex his bass playing skills, providing a solid bass riff to underpin the music as the song goes through its myriad changes of tempo and key.

*Maker of Mine* returns us to the hard rock riffage of *Be Your Man* before the album's title track allows Godfrey to lay down some more delicate guitar lines (a welcome respite from the thick, dense riffs of the previous track) and the song at times sounds like Demob Happy have somehow stumbled across an outtake from *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Swirling sound effects, reminiscent of *A Day in the Life*, only adds to that feeling.

*Spinning Out* is probably the heaviest song on the album: furious guitar riffs and

thumping drums drive the song forward with an irresistible momentum. ♦Gods I♦ve Seen♦ pulls back the tempo slightly but does not relent on the riffs, with the bass guitar in particular being prominent on this track. Album closer ♦Fresh Outta Luck♦ sounds almost like a Blur song (specifically from around the time of their superb *13* album) and the chorus burrows deep into your head: of all the songs on the album, this is the one that is guaranteed to be an earworm. ♦You♦re fresh outta luck,♦ sings Marcantonio, but on the basis of *Holy Doom*, Demob Happy have luck to spare.

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The album powers along at a great pace. It is a mean, lean, beast of a record. The songs will undoubtedly explode when performed live. You♦ll dance, you♦ll mosh, you♦ll be drawn in. If you ever wondered what the music of The Beatles during their 1967-68 psych pomp would sound like when crossed with Nirvana♦s angst-grunge of the early 1990♦s, then the answer is found in this album.