



**THE DUKE SPIRIT  
BIOGRAPHY**

[www.dukespirit.com](http://www.dukespirit.com)

**The Duke Spirit are Liela Moss (Vocals), Luke Ford (Guitars), Dan Higgins (Guitars), Toby Butler (Bass) and Olly Betts (Drums)**

“Sadness can be a great trigger for the imagination” explains Liela Moss, she of the golden tresses. “Though through it you can reach a sweet centre, a stronger core, which itself feels a bit like love itself.”

Sadness and redemption; death and rebirth - such are the themes on The Duke Spirit's long awaited second album “Neptune”. After a year spent touring America in 2006 – taking in everything from broken limbs (Toby in Las Vegas), getting all their gear stolen (Portland) and visiting rock landmarks (the MC5's old HQ in Ann Arbor), the band could have been forgiven for writing an on the road album worthy of Jack Kerouac. But for a group influenced by European art and culture as much as Route 66, there were always going to be deeper depths to explore.

“Musically we wrote the songs in England, and then ended up recording them in Joshua Tree, which is literally in the middle of nowhere, three hours drive from Los Angeles“ explains Luke. “So there's a real contrast between the sound and the content. We like to be contrary. It's an album full of images about the ocean, recorded in the desert.”

“Quite unexpectedly, water seeped into lots of my phrases and titles” continues Liela. “I feel like going to the desert was the only rightful place to take these images of submersion, Sea gods and ships. I wanted to dry out in the heat of the sun and start anew.”

It's almost two years now since The Duke Spirit released their debut album ‘Cuts Across the Land’. The musical equivalent of closed curtains, it spoke of narcotic nights, wounded hearts and absolution in the eyes of strangers. In a climate where a rock'n'roll mindset meant wearing the same jeans for four days running, it belonged to a more illustrious British lineage: MBV, The Stones, JAMC. Following rave reviews and support tours with everyone from Mercury Rev to Kasabian, the band naturally found America calling. Two hundred and eighty-five gigs later, they came home.

“Last year we worked really hard, driving ourselves in a van across America with no money” explains Toby. “We played anywhere that would have us. When you've survived that, you feel indestructible.”

Put it down to the touring, chemical imbalance or a ferocious self-belief, but The Duke Spirit's second album is a vindication of such an old school work ethic. Produced by desert rock guru Chris Goss (Soulwax/ QOTSA) over seven weeks in the spring, it has the absolute feel of a classic as timeless as the road itself. It is the band's winning moment, signaling a new beginning.

“We started recording on Mayday, which, ironically, was a year to the day since we'd last been in the studio” continues Luke. “On our second night there, we went to Coachella to

138 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York City 10001  
212.246.2640 • fax: 212.582.6513



see Sonic Youth and Bjork, who were both huge influences on us when we were younger. After that, we spent a few days in a place called 29 Palms, which is next to a huge military base in the middle of nowhere. All you could hear were missiles going off, and all you could see were grade 2 haircuts! It was a completely alien landscape.” Add gigs in deserted Western towns, pilgrimages to Gram Parsons’ final resting place and a bohemian atmosphere which meant anyone from Eric Burdon to Josh Homme might be spotted at the local liquor mart, and it was the ideal location for the band to flourish. “The point, I guess, is that recording out in the desert influenced us, but it didn’t inspire these songs” ” adds Olly. “That had all come before.” Indeed. One listen to “Neptune” will convince you The Duke Spirit have come of age. If ‘The Step And The Walk’ is a sadistic re-invention of ‘Heard It Through The Grapevine’ and ‘You Really Wake Up The Love In Me’ a quasi—holy plea for redemption, ‘Dog Roses’ is a Spector-esque ballad so hypnotic and sinister it could lure sailors to their doom. And ‘My Sunken Treasure’? It’s like a cruel girl group of mermaids calling or sobbing from the cliffs.

“‘My Sunken Treasure’ is an achingly personal diary-entry about my obsession with endings” explains Liela. “Hopefully, when all is said and done, it will become one of those universally-understood tracks about sadness feeding on itself when loved ones split, in the same vain as the best soul tracks about the same thing; like Ahmet Ertegun's ‘Don't Play That Song’ or Holland-Dozier-Holland's ‘Reflections’.” Throughout, “Neptune” sees an ebb’n’flow of songs tracing high times and sad times; a seductive swamp of charged emotions, set to blistering guitars. ”Listening back to it, I started to wonder whether I had been summoned by an imaginary sea-god” continues Liela. “I guess in the end it was about being pulled under, and washed down to begin a regenerative phase in life - and in rock and roll too. For too long the sounds and bands in our scene/culture have been stagnating.” And “This Ship Was Built To Last”? “That was a title that Toby came up with. I loved the notion of having a ship as the winning image on the album. After all the links to tears, rain and the sea, it’s the pivotal track that sees us triumph, if you like; making a renewed statement of intent. There’s a universal positivity to the album. There’s still that brutal, ferocious side to The Duke Spirit, but it’s no longer an angry, dislocated ferocity. There is triumph in the sound. We’ve earned our wings.”

Looking for a band versed in rock’n’roll mythology and boasting outsider art sensibilities fronted by a seductive, deep sea diva? Look no further. Inside the city walls, charlatans pass themselves off as saviours of rock’n’roll. But listen close, and there’s a rolling thunder in the hillsides. Post the sentries, man the gates. The Duke Spirit are coming.

Paul Moody  
London,  
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