



RECORD REVIEWS

Lost Animal Ex Tropical

'Ex Tropical' – the debut album for Lost Animal – is nothing short of breezy, seedy brilliance from a nonchalant savant. Words by **KATE HENNESSY**.

Lost Animal is the solo project of Jarrod Quarrell, previously singer and songwriter in St Helens. St Helens [broke up](#) in 2010, just a year after their acclaimed debut LP [Heavy Profession](#) was released. [Reportedly](#) the band split so Quarrell could focus on Lost Animal, and now comes *Ex Tropical*, the fruit of that premature divorce.



On a first listen, it's a weird ride. *Ex Tropical* takes the balmy island vibe of dub reggae and ices it way down, re-locating it

somewhere urban and mean. It layers the mid-tempo schmaltz of '80s funk-soul ballads with morose horns a la Morphine and the chic Caribbean groove of Grace Jones. There's washes of dubstep warble, mawkish keys and several echoes of early Eno. Tying it all together is Quarrell's voice, that same worldly, windswept drawl that made St Helens fans swoon. What he lacks in range he bleeds in cool, managing to fuse nonchalance with intensity; insouciance with intent.

Truly, Quarrell's voice is a marvel. Yeah, he's got a Midas touch for pacing and delivery but it's more than that, something you can't learn or mimic. It's a voice that sneers at the notion of effort; swaggers in to deride all those who try too hard or seem too eager. If it took months of slogging it out to record *Ex Tropical's* vocal tracks, no residue of that labour remains. Yet even though it seems to come so easy his voice is still so affecting. It has a physical persuasiveness, a sexual danger, like that feeling when the night suddenly cracks apart with promise. It could go good, it could go bad, but whichever way it rolls, you've surrendered to the momentum. "Well I got high in a wild land/I can't get back down."

While parts of *Ex Tropical* sound upbeat – like the marimba jam on 'Buai Raskol' - it's surface-level flourish only. Below that it's dark terrain. Moreover, you get the feeling nothing's going to change Quarrell's outlook. This palpable finality is expressed in his first words on the record on '(Intro) Beat Goes On': "When I was a boy mother told me/The biggest killer is a made up mind/Now I'm full grown I'm in danger/But I got a beat and the beat goes on."

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TRACKLISTING

1. (Intro) Beat Goes On
2. Say No To Thugs
3. Buai Raskol
4. Don't Litter
5. Cold Cut Nature
6. Ex Tropical
7. Lose The Baby
8. Greylands
9. Old Lovers
10. Sundown



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Buai Raskol by [Lost Animal](#)

The most distressing song is 'Lose the Baby', stripped back from its St Helens days and loaded with enough baleful, bitter honesty to make your throat constrict. "Down on the street they're gonna steal a car/With cold lips, blue heart/But lose the baby or we won't get far/And if you think that it cuts me up/I'm gonna sharpen up my tongue and really cut you up/And if you think that it gets me down/I'm gonna gather all my strength and really drag you under." Take from it what you will but it's not going to be pretty. I watched as the colour drained from the faces of a room as Quarrell sung 'Lose the Baby' live, full of dark, inscrutable purpose. I watched as those tapping their feet or nodding their heads slowly stopped moving at all.



[Lose The Baby](#) by [Lost Animal](#)

Not that listening to the more disturbing parts of *Ex Tropical* gets any easier in private. It doesn't. Combine Quarrell's recurring themes of city streets, sun, beaches, dawn and water with his atmospheric and often beautiful backing tracks and *Ex Tropical* starts to snowball into quite a head-fuck as you question why you feel so perturbed. Until you realise that what may sound like easy listening, isn't easy at all. Usually, honest and confessional music is a redemptive experience, even if it's sad. There's a generosity extended from songwriter to listener, an acceptance that their perspective is permitted, for a time, to become yours. But with Quarrell, this exchange is fraught. His vision is too singular and his vulnerability is too barbed. There's no place in there for us to get comfortable so we're kept at arm's length – un-trusted, un-wanted. But it's precisely this amalgam of honest and guarded that makes Lost Animal so compelling. He's a bona fide enigma.

“It's precisely this amalgam of honest and guarded that makes Lost Animal so compelling.”

The sadness of 'Lose the Baby' is rivalled by the slow-burning menace of 'Don't Litter', which is as creepy as it is well-crafted. On 'Old Lovers', the romantic idealists are rewarded by the Eno-influenced lullaby of 'Old Lovers', which injects undying love with a dose of Quarrell's idiosyncratic jadedness. "I'm with you baby in the night/Holding on to you with everything I have/And with you baby, I'm proved right/Cos

it's true that old lovers don't die/They just find somebody new to love.”

On the final track, Quarrell strips it right back. It's called 'Sundown', and fittingly so. His voice materialises like an apparition mocking you from another realm, backed only by desolate, zombie-like chimes and the aural equivalent of an evil wind. The last words uttered are, "I'm a killer with a cold, cold heart", before it all slips away into a shapeless, soundless void. A (heart)beat elongates. And flatlines.

+

'Ex Tropical' is out now through Sensory Projects. It'll be launched at Melbourne's Toff In Town on October 31.

- Published on Thursday, October 20 2011 by [Kate Hennessy](#).

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[untold/animals](#) said 3 days ago:

Haven't heard the release but I want to now. An incredible piece of writing, perhaps the very best this site has seen for a long while.



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BigBoysSocks said 3 days ago:
It's got something, that's for certain.



Goal attack said 3 days ago:
shirtless lyrics!



pleasedonot said 3 days ago:
That was a great read, thanks Kate. Heard a track on Triple R the other morning and it really grabbed me, so I can't wait for the launch.



BigBoysSocks said 3 days ago:



BigBoysSocks said 3 days ago:
Loves to get his gear off.



Goal attack said 3 days ago:
Really good sounding stuff



hardtop said 3 days ago:
X L N T



Adrian-Ronalds said 3 days ago:
F K N X L N T



monkeyman said 3 days ago:
What I've heard on the radio so far has been amazing. I always found the twin vocals on St Helens a bit distracting, so I think it's great he's gone 'solo'. Also the music is really layered and interesting, not your typical indie rock.

Will be picking this one up for sure.



funtimes said 3 days ago:
Keen to get my hands on this, One of the most interesting acts around at the moment, Getting a bit sick of verbed out clangy guitar beach boy bands.



FrankieTeardrop said 3 days ago:
Excellent to read Kate Hennessy's writing on M+N again. It's been a while. Correct me if I'm wrong.



josejones said 3 days ago:
Kate's been overseas. We're very happy to have her back.



mule said 3 days ago:
Best article i've read since being on this site

His voice materialises like an apparition mocking you from another realm, backed only by desolate, zombie-like chimes and the aural equivalent of an evil wind.

What a line!!



Scale said 3 days ago:
lovely bit of writing.
Must get this record ASAP; JQ is one of the best song writers and performers in Australia. Has been since The New Season.



untold/animals said 3 days ago:
Maybe you can go to the shop and buy it once you manage to get your face off his cock, then.



untold/animals said 3 days ago:
KIDDING
Sorry, I just really wanted to say that. Nothing personal. Haha.



mule said 3 days ago:
haha



Scale said 3 days ago:
It's so great when internet bitches are so sad and gutless that they can't even own their own bullshit.
JUST KIDDING!!!



__v said 3 days ago:
Promising thread.



Goal attack said 3 days ago:
guys guys, take a chill pill, take your shirts off and let's mingle



untold/animals said 3 days ago:
It wasn't sad and gutless! It was happy and bare chested. Feel the promise!



BIG PUSSY said 3 days ago:
is this cd only??



wintertime said 3 days ago:
Interesting music. Find his vocals a little bit too coolsy, but the music is well produced (not over-produced), and has an interesting range of instruments and is a good blend of styles. Will check out the album.



untold/animals said 3 days ago:
Interesting that there's no mention of any other humans. Who produced it? Was Shags involved in the recording? Were others?

B_G_P_SSY, it doesn't seem like Sensory really do any other formats (just CD, digital) so I wouldn't be betting on vinyl unless someone like Mistletoe decide to do that half of it.



untold/animals said 3 days ago:

I mean, that sounds like a pretty Shagsy MG-1 solo on Lose The Baby. Amirite?



FrankieTeardrop said 2 days ago:

Interesting that there's no mention of any other humans.

I don't see this as a problem. Jarrod IS Lost Animal. His photo is on the cover. He's shirtless. What more do you want?



alec m said 2 days ago:

Interesting that there's no mention of any other humans. Who produced it? Was Shags involved in the recording? Were others?

It's not always important to have this information. You might get something different out of it without this knowledge.



untold/animals said 2 days ago:

Yeah, dudes, I get that! Which is why I said it was 'interesting', not 'shameful' or something. No, a 360 degree account of the "band" and who helped make the record is not always necessary or helpful and it doesn't always add something to the interpretation.

I just figured that if, for example, Shags was credited with any sort of producer role (a la Brous) then that'd definitely influence the way some people understood things like the "mid-tempo schmaltz of 80s funk-soul ballads" or basically any part of the record that might sound anchored in a particular time period, or very coloured by analogue synthesis. Considering that Shags seems for all intents and purposes part of the band now, and the fact that I don't know when that happened in relation to when this record was produced and then finished, it's not nitpicky of me to be slightly curious.



untold/animals said 2 days ago:

Anyway, y'all are right in that this is clearly all about Jazza.



alec m said 2 days ago:

I was just suggesting you question why you want to know that kind of information. You seem to have your own reasons, great. "Lose the Baby" is a cool song by the way.



alec m said 2 days ago:

(personally I'm better off knowing nothing about how the music was made or who made it)

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