

BROKEN DC

Dense and atmospheric dream pop from London.

DREAM POP MAY not be a genre that many prog fans are particularly familiar with, but it's certainly worth examining. A descendant of the psychedelic scene, it was the forerunner to much of what would follow in the shoegaze and post-rock movements, and its atmospheric obsessions would eventually re-emerge in the influences of bands like Porcupine Tree.

Why is this relevant, you may ask? Well, for psychedelic bands such as London's Broken DC, who are projecting the familiar forms of the genre in a darker, more angular light, it still offers huge scope for experimentation.

"Saying I didn't want to do something I'd done before was quite hard for me," recounts guitarist and vocalist Kevin Williams, "because I didn't really know where to go — especially when you're just a guitar player. I started off in the early 00s doing hardcore and post-hardcore, y'know?" Moving on to other bands, including progressive instrumentalists Capricorns, it wasn't until Kevin met co-guitarist and vocalist Ivona Behalova when their old bands played together that the idea for Broken DC came about.

"That's how it started really, a few conversations and then one day I decided to send her some stuff, she decided to send some stuff back and we both liked each others' things and that was it really, we just started writing from there. It was basically just a two-piece for a while, with no plans to do it as a band, more of just a studio thing. Of course, once you start doing it, the more you realise you like the stuff and then you think, 'Well, it would be good if we could get someone to play drums on this.'"

Enter their drummer Ben Savigear, an old friend of Kevin's: "I always forgot he played drums actually," Kevin laughs, describing finding Ben after fruitlessly searching high and low for a drummer. "He said, 'You do remember that I play drums, right?' and I was like, 'Oh yeah, you do.'" It took a while from that point to come together however, with the experience of playing in the new format meaning the band had to turn up louder, and then start over in their search for their voice.

Williams recalls, "It suddenly clicked one day that there was this thing that we were doing... the stuff we'd written before became redundant, basically. We scrapped all this stuff and focused on writing a whole record that sounded like that."

Astragal, the sprawling, brooding record that resulted, was aided in no small part by the hand of Daniel O'Sullivan of Ulver and Sunn O))), at the helm. "His input into this record has been as much as any of us, and without him, I don't think this record would have sounded the way it does," Kevin muses. Although dense in layers and rich in atmospheric melody, it's a coherent and consistent listen, suggesting a subtle hand guiding the flow of the album.

When asked what he loves about music, Kevin laughs, "Twenty years ago, I'd have given you a totally different answer," he says, before adding that now, it's "just trying to do something different, something new; making something that I haven't heard, that I wanna listen to". **AL**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Ivona Behalova (guitar, vocals) **Kevin Williams** (guitar, vocals) **Ben Savigear** (drums)

SOUNDS LIKE

Dark dream pop with hints of *Silent* and *Bass Communion*

CURRENT RELEASE

Astragal, out 7th October

WEBSITE

brokendc.bandcamp.com



"It's about making something that I haven't heard, that I wanna listen to."



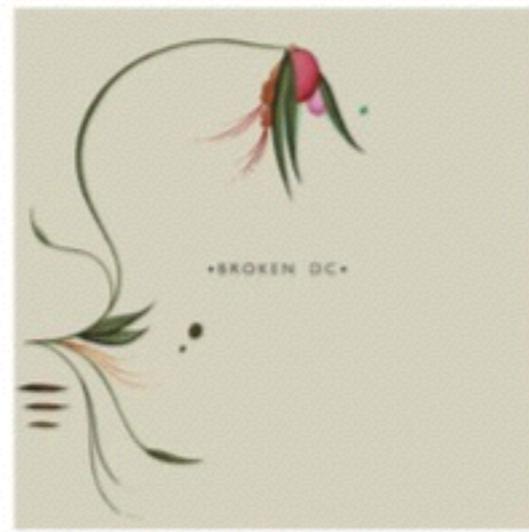
Broken DC, l-r: Ivona Behalova, Kevin Williams, Ben Savigear.

BROKEN DC

Astragal BANDCAMP

Noise and beauty from the mean streets of London.

Broken DC's latest offering is almost too beautiful to have come from a city as brutal and relentless as London. There's plenty of howling noise in their twin guitar work, sure, but it's all presented with such poise and delicacy, you barely dare breathe for fear of destroying it. Sonically, they're like a wonderful meeting between Slint, Mogwai, *Disintegration*-era Cure and Cocteau Twins, the ethereal, will o' the wisp vocals of the latter mirrored in their most measured moments. And yet they're very much their own band. It's an almost visual experience, which makes sense as *Astragal* takes its title



from French-Algerian author Albertine Sarrazin's novel of the same name, a celebration of rebellion, love and survival that inspired Patti Smith to become a musician. And so when a lonely violin keens on *Namer Of Clouds*, a wild, unpopulated

landscape leaps into the imagination, while the sense of isolation deepens further on the desolate *Forever Blue*. *Hollow Tree*, with its raspy, roughshod vocals, breaks off into shards of guitar that crash around the listener like broken glass. This is post-rock at its smartest, revealing a little more with each listen. **EJ**

(((O))) : BROKEN DC – ASTRAGAL

By: Elizabeth Klisiewicz

Broken DC | [facebook](#) | [bandcamp](#) |

Released on October 7, 2016 via [God Unknown Records](#)

Broken DC is a rather mysterious UK psych band, and this is their debut release. The album is named after a work of fiction by Albertine Sarrazin and was produced by Dan Sullivan (Ulver, Sunn O)). It is a beautiful musical work on many levels. Offered up are shades of light and dark, broken up by gorgeous washes of violin and interspersed between occasional jarring discord. It is autumnal and deep, revealing itself more with repeated listens. The label's Bandcamp page provides no credits, but I hit paydirt on Facebook.

The band hails from London, and label themselves 'post rock'. I guess that is apt, as far as labels go. Their sound is expansive and cinematic, as evidenced by opening track, "White Sheet". It is short and comprised of many layers, and things are happening in different musical spaces. It ends too abruptly and is caught up by "Chimes", where guitarist Ivona Behalova emotes gently in the distance. The backing melody is a bit disquieting and ominous. It's like a soundtrack to a movie where you know something bad is lurking around the next corner, and you know the music will escalate accordingly.

"Hollow Tree" is deceptively simple, starting out like something that fell off a Traffic album, with hints of an unknown stringed instrument keeping time with sparsely plucked guitar. Then the band jacks up the volume, and it becomes something different altogether. Very cool! "Black Candles" filters through like an ancient Romani tune, and is a bit trippy by song's end.

"Forever Blue" starts off with drones and a trumpet! It all works to the band's advantage, and means the listener is always guessing. "Soon the Monsoon" is another fantastic song, my second favorite on an already great record. It's a shoegazey instrumental, and one I keep returning to. Album closer "Always Is Now" explores the band's spacier side and marries it some hard hitting, crashing rock chords. Much later in the song, there are vocals, and the song folds back in on itself and ends on a high note. For fans of Slint, and for anyone who enjoys well written and played instrumental music.

PSYCH INSIGHT: ALBUM REVIEW, ASTRAGAL BY BROKEN DC

As summer turns to autumn there's a certain melancholia in the air. It's often a time for introspection, for remembering the (relative) warmth of the season gone by; while at the same time looking forward to the beauty of what is to come. The colours that arrive as leaves gradually lose their sense of purpose. It is a bittersweet time, which is the sort of feeling I get when I listen to this new release from Broken DC, a self proclaimed 'post rock' trio founded in London in 2012.



As the latest release from God Unknown Records, it becomes part of a select yet diverse series of albums; all of which follow their own distinct paths. On the one hand [Cavalier Song](#) was for the most part ambient and elegiac, while [Henge](#) tore a new hole in the noise rock firmament; this Broken DC album finds itself somewhere in between. This is wholly appropriate for a release whose title refers to the, often invisible, moulding placed on the edge two conjoining panes of glass. There is a fragility to the music found here, a translucence that invites you to peer deep into it...what you get back may be your own reflection, projection or a fresh perspective.

This is one of those albums that initially sounds to be quite light and unchallenging. Listen to it a few times though and you begin peel back the layers of meaning you gradually see the depth to this album; like looking into glass the perspective is as profound as you want it to be. This is an album to sit with and consider in all its fragility and mystery. Going back to the autumnal analogy it feels there is a warmth to these songs, but that this is in some sense residual as a bleaker and more stark landscape begins to emerge. This, I guess, is the translucence that I was referring to earlier.

Going through this Broken DC album it is difficult to say which tracks I prefer, because this release is so consistent throughout from the misty intro of 'White Sheet' to the opaque beauty of 'Always is Now'. Nevertheless, certain tracks do seem to have stayed with me more significantly than others. I absolutely adore 'Namer of Clouds' with its gentle acoustic guitar coda and lilting bass line, it is a track that cajoles and lulls in equal measure, and reminds me of one of my favourite albums of the year thus far from [Heron Oblivion](#). I really like the way that the music builds up to a crescendo then just melts away at the end. 'Phase In/ A Still River Flows' is the longest on the album and is, in many ways, typical of what is on offer here. It begins with layers of different sound competing for our attention before settling into a beautifully intoned melody, inviting us to tune in amidst the cacophony of what is around us. It is at once uplifting and dense, inviting us to sift through the layers of sound.