



Beachfield- Brighton Bothways

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"Can you imagine?"

An album that starts with that question can't be so bad

That's what pop is about, after all: imagination. "Can you imagine," asks Glenn Thompson, just a second and a half into his debut album, and forty minutes of imagination and inspiration follow. Imagination and inspiration blossom in their own way, far from the centers of pop, in the "splendid isolation" of Australia. There Glenn Thompson was the drummer in one of the most inspired and inspiring bands since the invention of the guitar: The Go-Betweens, whom *NME* called "a dream of what a pop group should be." A dream of a pop group with two coequal and yet so different singer-songwriters, Grant McLennan and Robert Forster. The dream ended in May 2006 with McLennan's sudden death. Now we know that the Go-Betweens had a third highly talented auteur. That Forster and McLennan could not tolerate a third songwriter, when Forster had to tolerate McLennan and McLennan Forster, is understandable somehow. And so Glenn Thompson saved his songs for his own coming out. Welcome to the enchanting and sometimes strange world of Beachfield.

Beachfield? Sounds almost like a Go-Betweens song, but in fact it is Glenn Thompson's new one-man-with-a-little-help-from-his-friends-band. But let's stop talking about his ex-band now. Better to recall what can happen when drummers step out from behind their cover and get behind a microphone with their own songs. Iggy Pop was one case, Maureen Tucker a very special one, and Robert Wyatt a tragic one with great consequences. So, never underestimate the drummer who goes independent!

Like the great band that shall no longer be mentioned here, Beachfield is also a little inconspicuous, and like that band his inconspicuousness turns out to be elegant understatement. Glenn Thompson tells stories from the everyday lives of the people next door, writes an insightful critic, but he is looking through the wrong end of the telescope. Listening to it causes a series of déjà vu experiences about which one remains uncertain: Hey, isn't that the beginning of "My Sweet Lord"? Or "I don't want to talk about it"? Yeah, but the Crazy Horse original. And do people in Australia know this odd combo called Smokie?

Such déjà vus flash up, only to disappear again in these nearly perfect song postcards. Postcards? The band that shall not be mentioned had one single on the Postcard label, whose slogan was "The Sound of Young Scotland." That's a place where people understand a certain euphoric melancholy that certain Beachfield songs exude as well. Aztec Camera wunderkind Roddy Frame in particular was an artist of this emotional register. You get carried away like that by "Brighton Bothways," something that doesn't happen that often, after all. You go into raptures, make comparisons and remember, and you hear Glenn Thompson sing about picking up fallen leaves in the road and putting them back on the tree: "it's winter time again" . . . songs about seasons and the weather are among the most difficult to pull off, and the band that shall not be mentioned was great at it as well. Beachfield carries on the tradition.

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