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## THE GO-BETWEENS – OCEANS APART

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**„It is the simple that is hard to achieve“ – what Berthold Brecht wrote about this in „In Praise of Communism“ can also be applied to Pop songs. The often conjured up good, clear Pop song in itself. Many too many fail.**

The Australian Go-Betweens are without a doubt masters of the good song, ever since Karen, a librarian, introduced them to Brecht and other great authors. 1978, „Karen“, the Go-Betweens first single. Spartanic, uneven, but whoever heard this record had to loose his heart to this band.

During the 80s, the Go-Betweens were less uneven, but on their six regular albums Robert Forster and Grant McLennen worked their way up to becoming the decade’s best songwriter-duo of intelligent Indie Pop (in word and sound) of that decade. Two profiles, occasionally antipodes, that somehow always found their way back to a whole that was more than the sum of its parts. On the one side, Robert Forster’ somewhat angular-expansive style, on the other side Grant McLennan’s wonderful melodies.

„Liberty Belle & The Black Diamond Express“ (1986) was a milestone in Pop history, which unfortunately was noticed by too few people, „16 Lovers’ Lane“ was the title of the equally excellent (provisional) end. The band broke up, Robert and Grant pursued solo careers.

During the 90s early demos („The Lost Album“) and the Best-of compilation, „Bellavista Terrace“, were also released. The band’s reputation continued to grow, even though the group no longer existed. That is perhaps why Robert & Grant waited until 1999 to reunite for a tour. The Go-Betweens were back. And the albums, “The Friends of Rachel Worth” and “Bright Yellow Bright Orange”, from 1999 and 2002 respectively, sounded as if they had never been gone.

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## 2005:

Robert Forster opens the new album, "Oceans Apart", with the driving song "Here Comes A City". The description of his last train ride from Regensburg (where he had lived for some years) and Frankfurt offers evidence of the cause of the album's special spirit and homogeneity: Robert Forster returned to Australia. There, where Grant McLennan had been living again. So, they saw each other more regularly, not just meeting in the studio once every two years with each of them bringing the obligatory five songs. The democratic sharing of credits and lead vocals continued as before, but a Go-Betweens rehearsal is still sitting down together, discussing books and films, sharing friends. The old cliché, but good. This is a band which also includes bass player Adele Pickvance and drummer Glen Thompson, both of whom have accompanied Robert & Grant ever since their solo years.

**"Oceans Apart"** presents the quartet tighter than they have ever been. You can interpret the title however you want. Does it stand for the protagonists' very different styles when it comes to songs? For the distance between the focal points of their lives and the London studio, where producer Mark Wallis recorded the album? Robert Forster doesn't care: "Maybe it's just the name of a bar next to the studio."

What remains the same: Forster is still the storyteller, the chronicler; McLennan deals with emotional states. But the songwriting comes together. Forster's and McLennan's hardcore fans will have a hard time identifying their favorites, even though it is Forster, who usually sets the tempo. As is the opening track or in the jaunting "Born To A Family". The epic "Darlinghurst Nights" is not at the center of attention just because of its six-minute length. This monument of a song is built up from the acoustic introduction to the furious finale, where horns drunkenly stagger out of the song reminiscent of "Sgt. Pepper". McLennan's "No Reason To Cry" can be understood as a greeting to former band member and girlfriend Amanda Brown: friendly, without bitterness. Surprisingly, he is allowed the "heaviest" guitar riff on the album in his "This Night's For You". Moreover it can hardly be ignored how much care and creativity has been put into the rhythm arrangements. It could be a groove box setting the tempo ("The Statue") or rumbling percussion sound painting a background landscape ("Lavender").

"Oceans Apart" is "complete" in the best sense of the word. Bass and drums provide the earthy foundation, while the guitars jangle, sparkle and write melodies in the sky. "Oceans Apart" is not hectic, loose, cleverly light-footed, relaxed. That has nothing to do with the wisdom of age, but with the timelessness of good ideas. Great art with a light touch.