

Archive – With Us Until You’re Dead
Interview with Dave Pen
www.mittelstern.de

As it’s always said that Archive is a collective of people around the core of Darius, Danny and sometimes Pollard is named, too, what about you, Dave? Where do you see yourself in the Archive collective right now and regarding the new album?

I think you’re right. Obviously Archive is a collective which is built up around Dan and Darius, the founder members of Archive. Maria and I were sort of the first persons to start to collaborate with them in a way. And I’ve always stepped in and out because of other projects I’ve always had. But for this album I’ve actually sort of gone in with the band so it’s kind of four of us main members of Archive which is Darius, Dan, Pollard and myself now. To say it again the great thing with Archive and being in a collective is that you still do get the freedom to work with the ideas that really work for yourself – if it’s an idea that isn’t quite right, if you don’t feel a connection to it then you don’t necessarily have to work on it. It’s kind of a unique thing and I’m in a really good position within the collective. I have my own role within there. And I’ve got the songs I’m writing about which are slightly different to what maybe Maria’s will be, or Pollard’s.

So yeah, I’ve got three songs on the new record which is good. It’s kind of a nice balance ... no it’s hard to balance between four vocalists on one record. It’s not easy. But the three songs I got I feel really connected to and I’m really happy with that.

If you feel that connected to your songs – in case you won’t be any longer a part of the Archive collective due to any reasons, can you imagine how you would feel with somebody else performing your songs?

I can imagine it would be ... I can’t imagine. When I came into Archive in 2004, obviously that was before the album *Lights*, so there was no actual songs that I had written with the band. So I was singing what was already written which is something I’ve never done before. And I’ve never really wanted to do that to be honest. But I feel like I’ve done those songs justice in my own way and within the band because they are great songs. I think it would be quite strange to see Archive playing and someone else hear singing the songs I’ve written. I think I’d probably think I was dreaming. I don’t know, I can’t imagine. Seeing it would be quite surreal. But I’d love to see someone actually cover. That’s always interesting. That’s definitely different. I think if comes the time when I’m watching Archive and someone else is singing my songs I don’t know ... I’ve had become an astronaut or I’ve had my voice taken out.

In this collective meaning of a band – what about friendship? Which role does it play?

It’s a huge part to be honest. I think that’s another wonderful element of Archive, we all are really good friends. I think it was 1999 when I met Darius and Dan. I’ve been friend with them for a long time. I think that’s why I felt like I could go on and work with them. Because they were friends of mine – we would hang out, I would go to London when we were recording and they would come down to Southampton where I live. We talk about ideas, play music, get drunk and just hang out. There’s always a connection. So it’s like friends before work colleagues. But another great thing about it is, everyone does get on with this. If someone has a problem we always address it. I think we are very open with each other which is what a good friendship is built on, isn’t it? You trust each other and you can say what you want to each other and you respect it. So yeah, we’re kind of a big friendship-family.

Let's talk about the new album. I'm missing the voice of Rosko John. Why didn't you work with him this time?

It's just for this album, we are still working with Rosko and we still will be in the future. Because I think Rosko brings a brilliant part to the collective. A lot of this new album was built on the elements of love. This album is in the concepts of the different sights and places and masks that we wear when we are in love with people. I think with Rosko this wasn't quite the kind of where he would channeling his word and lyrics at the time. And he was working on his own project which he has been for a while. And with Holly coming in it was more a vocally sung album rather than being any raps and rhyme thing. It just wasn't the right record for Rosko, but that doesn't mean anything to the future.

With Holly you got a very young new member in your collective. How did you get to work with her?

Darius met her in London, someone introduced him to her and they had a chat. Darius really liked her voice but she was singing more folky kind of stuff. And I think Darius, being slightly twisted brained, that he has thought "Right, she's got a great voice but there's no way that she's gonna sing Folk with Archive. We gonna get her to sing a completely different style which is a great thing about Archive". And then she came down to Brighton to work with Darius and Dan. And I think Dan and Holly just really hit it off, they've just really connected really well. I think it was Dan who has blossomed with Holly and she's really fed of Dan's ideas. But I think that just scratched the surface of what I think she can do. She is young and she got loads of energy but she's also got quite a wise head. She seems older than she actually is. She's been through a bit, her lyrics are quite dark. It's exciting to have someone like her in.

Yeah, I think with her two songs Holly is adding a very fresh kind of energy, strength and even rage to the record. I was wondering how she – and probably her young age – did influence your work. Do you see her as kind of Archive's prevention of becoming too harmonic and quiet?

Maybe, yeah. She's definitely added a bit of youth to it. Not that we were trying to do that. I think with her coming in it's another great element. It brings an extra color. To me it's like a neon color, it's quite electric, quite bright. I think it's good because Controlling Crowds parts I to IV was definitely the darker side of Archive and the quiet all pressed in, it's all closed in and with the new record it's more a release of it, it's more energetic.

I'm always wondering how you decide who's performing a song's vocals. Is it always the one who came up with the idea or who wrote the lyrics?

Personally with me, if I come up with an idea and I'm working with Darius or Dan then I'll be thinking this is gonna be my choice. But with Darius and Dan, when they write then they think this is definitely gotta be for Pollard, we can hear Pollard on this. Or they think oh no, it's more for Maria. I think when Pollard has an idea, he wants to sing this idea, it's his vision. So we used to share that both kinds of ideas. But Darius and Dan never brought a song to me and said: "Can you sing this, this and this?" I've always started from scratch with them. So I always sing what I'm writing. And I haven't yet written lyrics for anyone else in the collective. Which I would like to but they'd probably read it and speak 'No Dave, this is too weird, it's more for you to sing.

Regarding your upcoming tour: Will all the vocalists be with you, Maria and Holly, too?

Yeah. It will be all four vocalists on this tour. It's really exciting because it's two women, two men on the vocals plus the whole band. It's like we're turning into some modern avant-garde crazy Abba. That's actually Darius' plan – to make a new Abba without the flares and the platform shoes.

I didn't have enough time with the album yet. So at the moment it feels to me like a collection of loose stories from very different characters, which also reflects this collective view of Archive.

What do you think is connecting all these songs? Is there a bigger story?

The initial idea is all based around love, how we all deal with it and how we go through that we do in life. We do fall in love, we fall out of love, we get screwed up by love, we feel great when we love. It's kind of a strange concept. It was Darius who initially said he really wanted just to channel a lot of those thoughts into this record. I think we can reflect, some of us are a bit older now and we calm through relationships, loved, hated and had been really messed up by relationships. It just felt like a good time to think back on things that happened to us personally and then channel all of these thoughts and hopefully they'll connect to other people. So that people know what it's about. When you hear songs like *Hatchet* by Holly, it seems like she'd been really hurt somewhere. It's like a revenge song and then with my song *Conflict*, it's about how you're constantly fighting against something whether you're fighting for keep it going or fighting to let it go. It's strange; it's weird when you just write stuff this all comes out. But I think they'll do link up, because the one thread through the middle is, if you look into it, they are all about emotions and love. But you have to really listen to and get into it to realize that there's an element of love in all of the songs.

Your song Rise is almost the only one that has an optimistic perspective; it's a very nice last song for the album. Can you tell me a bit more about it?

It was one of the last songs we did. That one it was basically a really old guitar loop and it was Pollard who said to Darius that we have to use it because it's a really nice guitar line. And I just kind of imagined something at the end because some of this album is quite chaotic. It's very colorful and crown-like. It just felt like a real organic bit between this and the instrumental song – *Calm Now* – I think that one and then *Rise* are the two moments in the record of dismal feeling, it's just a bit of peace, with optimism. In *Rise* it gets more ... you know ... everything will end and everything will begin. You think "oh, I'm never gonna do that again" or again to the love thing "I'll never love again" in a dramatic saying. But you will. You will start again. It just takes time to heal. So it's a bit of a healing song at the very end.

With the new record you've also changed your management and record label from a major (Warner Music Group) to an independent one (Cooperative Music). How did you come to that decision?

We've run our deal out with Warner and also with the old management. I just think it was time to move on. With the old management it felt a little bit like going over the same ground. I think we just wanted a new lease of life and we are lucky in this climate of trying to put records out. You know working with record companies is not easy these days, because record companies have to be very careful about what they chose and what they release. It's tough times in a way. And I think with Tony our new manager, he really seems to get the band in. He just brought a sort of straight forward, a fresh element to it, no messing around, let's just get this done. He believes in the band and he's really opening doors for us. I think that licensing to an independent is a modern way to go now

because we are in complete control of what we're producing. And it's good to have a good label like Cooperative into it. It's opening so many new doors, that we will have an English release. That is what we wanted for a long time and when we were with Warner that was never going to happen. You know, they were never gonna release in England, that door was firmly shut and to actually have that open now ...

I bought a music magazine here in England the other day, it's a really good music magazine, and we were reviewed. That's quite a nice milestone because it's almost ten years that I've been in Archive now and it's never been anything in England since then.

Yeah, it's really hard to believe that you're almost unknown in England especially when you sense the interest in you here on the European mainland.

I know. And for us, we are all British and we live in England, it's very strange. So we were all ready for having a new manager and having a new label to have this opportunity. And I think we're getting the record out in Australia as well and Japan and be to places we really wanna go. We really wanna take Archive across the oceans. And it's gonna happen. So it's been a really positive move and we're really happy with the way it's all gone. We're moving forward.

Let's try to get a connection to Dresden. I know you weren't with them, but Pollard, Danny and Darius were here in February last year for a DJ set in a small club. I talked to one of the two organizers and it turned out to be a nice story which had to do with the Pledge Music project for your live DVD ...

We did that for the Live in Athens DVD to help fund to make that DVD. Pledge is a British company, basically when you want to do something and self-fund it without a record company. Your fans can pledge money for things that you sell. With Archive we were selling handwritten lyric books all personally written by each member, old demos and vinyl and we did some other things which was if someone could sort out to pay the money we would come and DJ. And yeah, it was someone in Dresden who made it happen. I wasn't there but was it ... is there a bar called The Big Lebowski in Dresden?

Yeah it is. But the DJ gig was at Altes Wettbüro.

I've never been there but I think ... when we play in Dresden in October, I have a feeling that we've got some days off because Smiley, our drummer, is getting married so he's going home. I'm not sure but I just keep hearing about this Big Lebowski Bar ...

It's one of the two bars in Dresden that are open all night.

Ah yeah, I'm pretty sure ... cause Danny's been telling me for ages. And we have a day off after our show. So maybe we should try to arrange another DJ set in Dresden. We love DJing, especially when we have days off cause there's nothing else to do. A DJ set in Dresden could be quite good fun.

Let's see. I've got one last question left; "With us until you're dead" – is it a promise?

I don't know if it's a promise. It depends how long we live for. Yeah, it's quite a strange title to go with. We kind of toyed with a few other ideas but the fact that there's a line in one song which is in *Conflicts* and it's "with us until we're dead" we just thought we change it a bit. It's not like we're saying to our fans you're with us or we are with you until you're dead. It's just like a kind of realism. You know, everything we have is kind of with us until we are dead.