



Artist

THE USED

Label

BIG NOISE

Date

2020

by Ryan J Downey

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BIO

Painful and perverse, intimate and obnoxious, aggressively heavy and irresistibly catchy, confusingly profound and primitively pedestrian – The Used transform songs into *anthems*.

The reckless honesty and unrelenting dedication that saw The Used kick down doors at radio and MTV, for a generation of disenfranchised post-hardcore provocateurs, persists today. It's newly remade with a sly shimmer that never sacrifices the band's enchanting anarchy or restless soul.

Heartwork, the band's eighth studio album, arrives with the unbound spirit of the pair of platinum albums that first introduced The Used to the world, mixed with the dramatic flair of their gold-certified third. The emotion, sincerity, and vulnerability found on *The Used* (2002) and *In Love and Death* (2004) is more urgent and insistent than ever on *Heartwork*, a diverse 16-song offering filled with double entendre upon triple entendre. It traverses a thematic gamut of self-examination, hyper-literate exploration, political pyromania, and keenly self-aware yet unrestrained whimsy.

The charged manic energy of *Heartwork* will ring familiar to the multitudes who have seen The Used live, whether back in the day on Ozzfest, Warped Tour or Linkin Park's Projekt Revolution; on their sold-out coheadlining tour with Taking Back Sunday; or headlining Taste Of Chaos with support from My Chemical Romance, Rise Against, Killswitch Engage, and Underoath.

Songs like "Blow Me," "Cathedral Bell," and "Paradise Lost, a poem by John Milton" take their place alongside some of the best-known jams to emerge from the frenetic "screamo" world, anthems that conquered hearts and minds and Active Rock. "The Bird and the Worm," "The Taste of Ink," "All That I've Got," "I Caught Fire," and "Blood On My Hands" are beloved for their raw emotion, authentic defiance, and inviting empathy, all of which etched them into the spiritual DNA of a legion of likeminded listeners across the globe. As *Kerrang!* points out, The Used are hugely important trailblazers for the scene that gave us My Chemical Romance and Fall Out Boy.

Heartwork reunites the band with John Feldmann (Panic! At The Disco, blink-182, 5 Seconds

Of Summer), who became an early champion for The Used when the then-unsigned act tossed a demo onstage during a Goldfinger gig. He went on to produce the majority of their discography.

The Canyon (2017), an indulgent meditation on suicide and loss, was captured live-to-tape by Ross Robinson (Slipknot, At The Drive-In). The band calls the experience a “blessing” and a “gift,” but a painful exorcism they are happy to have survived. As much as *The Canyon* challenged both band and audience, by putting their art to the test, *Heartwork* stands in brilliant contrast. No less moving or angry, it’s nevertheless encased in warmth, curiosity, iconoclasm, and joyous lack of restraint.

The original incarnation of The Used was born from the conservative isolation, myopic boredom, and restless angst of their crucial formative years, spent some 45 miles from Salt Lake City in Orem, Utah. The inspiration Bert McCracken found in a box full of CDs by Sunny Day Real Estate, Converge, Ink & Dagger, and Texas Is The Reason was as instructive in the band’s formation as the feelings of alienation and disillusion he shared with the others, like the band’s bassist, Jepha. As Jepha has pointed out to the press, The Used wrote those important early albums 100 percent for themselves. It was doubly rewarding to see how much they would come to mean to people.

The Used were never afraid to embrace radio or MTV, turning punk convention on its head. But the way they aligned with the major label machine early on, with incendiary appearances on schlock like *TRL Spanking New Band Week*, put them in front of kids around the globe who felt the same as the band, about young adulthood and the increasingly fractious world abroad.

The subcultural impact of *The Used* (2002) and *In Love and Death* (2004) can’t be overstated. As much as the industry can exploit bands, The Used smartly exploited the system in turn. Even *Maybe Memories*, a collection of odds and ends released in 2003, went platinum. Similarly, the group never shied away from “emo,” jettisoning the word’s baggage to embrace its strength.

“Pretty Handsome Awkward” and “The Bird and the Worm” helped ensure *Lies for the Liars* (2007) was another smash. *Artwork* (2009) featured their dirtiest, nosiest and most vicious

songs to that point, without jettisoning the pop-infused sensibility of their earlier work. Prior to *The Canyon*, it was the band's only album that didn't involve Feldmann, stretching back to when McCracken tossed that demo onto the stage as the producer performed with his own band. Feldmann returned for *Vulnerable* (2012) and *Imaginary Enemy* (2014), which balanced the intensity of the self-produced *The Ocean of the Sky* EP (2013) with the pristine polish of the early albums.

Heartwork is layered and urgent, dense and desperate, and altogether eager to inspire. Raucous adrenaline, bigger choruses, more than a splash of reckless explosiveness, all through a modern laptop hip-hop lens built for Spotify playlists – that's just a sampling of what The Used have to offer in 2020. No two songs sound alike, as no stone is left unturned in pursuit of a musical muse that somehow, defiantly, never strays from being The Used.

Joey Bradford technically made his official recorded debut with The Used on the band's Record Store Day 2019 EP, *Live from Maida Vale*, but truly comes into his own all over *Heartwork*. His guitars bounce between muscular and angular, between riffs and jangly atmosphere. Dan Whitesides, rhythmic backbone since 2006, locks his drumming in with Jeph's basslines like never before. Electronic flourishes enhance, but never overpower, the rock, as it's all strung together by bigger than ever vocals hooks from their singer, who soars with irresistible charisma.

Bert McCracken can quote *Hamlet* as readily as he might Stephen King. The energetic and thoughtful singer's much publicized rehab stint a decade ago redirected his obsessions toward the written word and its greater connection to the world, from 18th Century Scottish enlightenment figure Adam Smith, to socialist revolutionary Karl Marx, to author and philosopher Paulo Freire.

Heartwork namechecks three of McCracken's favorite works of literature, beginning with "Paradise Lost, a poem by John Milton," inspired as much by the 1667 English epic as the context within which it was written. "Gravity's Rainbow" is named for the singer's favorite book ever, the 1973 novel by the famously dense, complex, and profound Thomas Pynchon. "1984 (infinite jest)" blends Orwell with David Foster Wallace; *Infinite Jest* shares several recurring themes with The Used: depression, addiction; corporate oligarchy. (Wallace, sadly, committed suicide in 2008.)

In addition to the literary figures woven throughout the record, the album features a number of formidable flesh-and-blood musical guests. These are folks who've appeared alongside The Used on festival and touring bills and who share the band's affinity for working with John Feldmann. Jason Aalon Butler (Fever 333) on "Blow Me"; Mark Hoppus (blink-182) on "The Lighthouse"; Travis Barker (blink-182) on "Obvious Blasé"; and Caleb Shomo (Beartooth) on "The Lottery."

The honesty, integrity, and freedom of expression championed by The Used endures, maintaining bonds that have outlasted numerous trends, and evolutions in the way music is consumed. It was never about being "celebrities" or "the biggest band ever" or drowning in oceans of adulation. The Used resist any form of corruption in their art and dominate on any stage.

Boredom, complacency, and entitlement remain in the crosshairs of The Used.

This music is a weapon.

LINEUP

Bert McCracken

Jepha

Dan Whitesides

Joey Bradford

TALKING POINTS

- Well over 100M views on YouTube
- 1.8M monthly Spotify listeners
- Ten Billboard Hot 100 singles
- Four Top 10 Debuts on the Billboard 200
- *The Used* (2002) certified platinum (1M sales in the US) in 2019
- *In Love and Death* (2004) certified platinum in 2019
- *Lies for the Liars* (2007) certified gold (500k sales) in 2019
- Reunited with longtime producer John Feldmann (Panic! At The Disco, blink-182)
- Guests include Jason Aalon Butler (Fever 333), Mark Hoppus (blink-182), Travis Barker (blink-182), Caleb Shomo (Beartooth)

PRESS

“The Used’s colorfully unhinged post-hardcore became a vital part of the scene responsible for breaking bands like My Chemical Romance [and] Fall Out Boy.”

- *Kerrang!*

“[A] knack for crafting brutal yet crowd-pleasing anthems.”

- *Billboard*

“Weird and catchy and unexpectedly funny.”

- *The New York Times*

“There’s no denying the galvanic power of singer Bert McCracken’s blowtorch vocals.”

- *Entertainment Weekly*

“Songs of self-abuse and suicide – and those are the sunnier moments – are wrapped in wailing riffs, big choruses and fiddly guitar solos.”

- *The Guardian*

“The post-hardcore foundations are here, complete with drama-fueled, singalong choruses, but what The Used have built upon them opens up a new world of creative opportunities.”

- *Classic Rock Magazine*

EDITED Q&A

You've seen a lot of changes in the way people consume and experience music.

BERT MCCRACKIN: To try and foresee the future of music is a bit of a pointless endeavor. So, you can only create art with your genuine emotions. Billie Eilish is a great example – her music is so full of her personality and emotion. I don't think it would be such a gigantic smash if it wasn't. I'm a dad; I don't even know what's "cool" to like, I like anything that's from the heart, that works for me. I do understand that this generation of listeners care a little bit less about what genre a band or a song belongs to, which is exciting. A lot of [mainstream] records coming out, like Machine Gun Kelly, sound like Warped Tour punk rock to me. When we make a record, the thing we focus on is: what are we trying to say? *Is this honest?* This band has been my journal for 19 years.

It's a great time for a new record from The Used.

BERT MCCRACKIN: The rule book is out the window. We were really fortunate to have a clean, blank canvas. It was insane. There are no rules at all anymore with music and genres. One of my favorite things about The Used is that there are so many different colors, so many different sounds.

Lyricaly, it's nice to think The Used sends listeners to the library.

BERT MCCRACKIN: Yeah, the connection to the world of books that I live in is the most exciting thing for me about the last couple of records. I've been able to take whatever I'm really loving at the time and kind of force it into the songs [laughs]. On this record, there's two songs that contain all three of my favorite books: *Gravity's Rainbow*, *1984*, and *Infinite Jest*. These books are such a part of my subconscious. Also, this is the first record where we've taken an "all-in" approach to writing the lyrics. We wrote them all in a room, together. Feldmann has a really keen ability to kind of capture the simplest form of something and I'm terrible at that. I sometimes try to make it more complicated, because I think it feels more ar-

tistic. But I'm not always right. And I definitely don't know the most. It was nice writing with everyone this time. It was really refreshing.

There's probably something in the in the push and pull between your more sort of hyper-literate side and Feldmann's more accessible side where the middle gets you your best stuff.

BERT MCCRACKIN: I think you're exactly right.

What draws you to *Gravity's Rainbow*? Pynchon is so difficult to penetrate.

BERT MCCRACKIN: It can be theorized over for years. There's just something so insane and special about the book. As far as the song... I don't have any personal social media, which has given me some good perspective. Maybe it's an unbearable elitism I'm slowly relaxing into. The people I love most in my life participate in Instagram; what can I say about it? But I do think that when you really lose yourself in your art; there are times when it's hard to do that now because of how relevant and prominent the whole social media thing is right now. The chorus of "Gravity's Rainbow" is about how I can walk through this fire, and be burned by it, [but still make it through].

When did you first discover *1984*?

BERT MCCRACKIN: I read it when I was young, probably in school. It's a very prominent book politically and it's strange that every single person can use it for their side. It's quite ingenious. But the most important part to me is the human side of it. What struck me the most recent time I read it was how the people involved in the party in the book are only a tiny percentage of that world. The large majority of the people are mostly free to do what they want because they aren't educated enough to [resist]. We are in an environment that's so similar to George Orwell's world. We don't even need Big Brother today; the social media algorithms are writing everything for us.

***Infinite Jest* is particularly poignant, knowing David Foster Wallace committed suicide.**

BERT MCCRACKIN: Yeah. It's especially powerful knowing how his story ended in real life and trying to make your way through the book with that knowledge. I feel like anyone who ever seriously reads David Foster Wallace, it changes their lives completely. It changes how you see everything. The way he writes, I look at everything differently. I'm not even kidding.

Let's talk about *Paradise Lost*.

BERT MCCRACKEN: I've always been a bit obsessed with that poem. I really dug deep into the poem and its author, John Milton. As I was reading a lot of his political essays, I realized that a lot of what 'Satan' says in *Paradise Lost* are quotes directly from John Milton's own mouth. A lot of people thought he was the devil back then. He had a huge problem with the show of opulence from the Church. He thought it was disgusting. His poem is about the failed revolution against the Church of England. And what's more incredible or exciting than a failed revolution?

Where does *Heartwork* fit in your catalog?

BERT MCCRACKIN: It definitely feels good to be back the true form of The Used. Recording with Ross [Robinson] was a blessing, a gift, an unforgettable experience. It was just too painful. Writing a record that's that self-indulgent and really trying to put art to the test was a dangerous move. I'm glad I made it out alive. The *in-the-studio-making-songs-for-fun* Used is really what this record is about. It plays on the emotions, sincerity, and vulnerability of the first two records with a little bit of the flair from *Lies for the Liars*, some of the cool production stuff that I loved.

And where might it land in the overall landscape?

BERT MCCRACKIN: As far as standing in the Spotify circle pit with Kesha and Halsey, it is just as modern sounding. John Feldmann's production is that professional. It sounds really

good. Those are two really random examples, but I think if you listen to both of [their] records, those songs are all over the place. There's dance, country, pop, actual punk rock riffs and drums.

Music is so all over the place right now that The Used fits in perfectly.

SELECT DISCOGRAPHY

Heartwork (2020)

The Canyon (2017)

Live & Acoustic at the Palace (2016)

Imaginary Enemy (2014)

The Ocean of the Sky EP (2013)

Vulnerable (2012)

Artwork (2009)

Lies for the Liars (2007)

Berth (2007)

In Love and Death (2004)

Maybe Memories (2003)

The Used (2002)