



Words: Sara Berkowitz-Eaker

After the massively successful spring tour “The Erasure Show,” Andy Bell’s solo debut album, “Electric Blue” has arrived. “Electric Blue” delves into Andy’s first true love, disco. As Andy pleads, “Pain in my heart. Pain in my soul. Pain in my feet” so too, will anyone who listens to this delicious array of dance beats. This album will enforce you to hit the dance floor as clubs across the world will begin to beckon us to feel the pain in our feet. Yes, Andy’s new album is THAT GOOD. After years of collaborating with Vince Clarke of Erasure and once Depeche Mode, Andy decided to step out of Erasure, if not for just a moment, the band is so not breaking up, so don’t even continue the rumor, to deliver 14 superb songs. This album includes a duet with Jack Shears (Scissor Sisters) and Claudia Brucken (Propaganda and Act). As live dates are being planned for late 2005/early 2006, I steal a moment away to talk with Andy Bell and his always appealing “boy next door voice...”

Hi Andy?

Hi

Hi, How are you?

Fine, thank you.

First off, I would like to say congratulations on your new album, Electric Blue. I think it's fantastic. I am a huge admirer of your work, I just caught your show a couple of months ago at the Avalon in Hollywood.

Oh yeah.

Yes, it was fantastic there wasn't a warm body in the room who wasn't up and dancing. How was this experience putting together “Electric Blue” different for you in terms of writing and recording outside of the context of Erasure?

Well, it was really a bit of an off the wall thing. When Erasure finished our other tour in the spring, these two guys actually had given me a four track CD and asked me if I would be interested in collaborating with them on these songs and I said sure. And they were Phillip Larsen and Chris Smith (who have previously

worked with Erasure, Moby, The B-52's, Stereophonics, and Goldfrapp) who lives around the corner from me here in London, so it was really quite relaxed. So, half of the tracks were collaborated with them, the other half of the songs were left up to me. The difference was that I would write the songs and melodies to these tracks, whereas with Erasure, we always would write the songs first. What was great was that I didn't have anyone to answer to except myself, really. It felt more of like a hobby, really.

How was it collaborating with Claudia Brucken and Jake Shears?

It was fine. I thought it might have been quite boring to have the whole album you know with just me...

No, Never!

I mean Claudia was just great, I mean I've met her a couple of times at Christmas parties, I didn't realize how much of her stuff I had in my collection. She is very professional and then with Jake, I was invited to go see them (Scissor Sisters) in London, and they dedicated a song to me, which was quite touching, and we met them backstage after the show and got drunk and I thought maybe he would like to do a song, so we met up later in New York, and put together some vocals, and that was "I thought it was you."

So, it takes getting drunk with you to nab a duet with you, is that what you're implying?

Laughing

Well, I noticed in this album within the context of your other works, there seems to be this running thread through your lyrics of loneliness and longing, yet the beats are always poppy, happy dance tracks. Do you think in a way that your music allows people to unite in their loneliness and pain through dance?

I think going out, especially going out when I first moved to London and went to this club, Heaven, I saw Boy George there and my mouth was sort of gaping open. And it really took me a while, I would really be sitting in the corner, and it really took my career to break me out of my shell, otherwise I would go to pubs and clubs and spend the whole evening dancing and showing off on the dance floor. People would say, "Wow, you're a really great dancer, do you go to school?" And I would say, "No," and they would be like, "Well, you should. It's in your nature." So, uh I really do think that music brings people together. Whether you're on your own, and going out, and you know expressing yourself to something that you really like.

It's rare to hear an artist nowadays kind of expand on the "artist's path" I really believe that the struggle is a continual experience no matter how many years you've been successful, in your work, do you have any thoughts for other struggling artists on you've kept on creating, and fueling, and maintaining your artistic pursuits?

Yeah, well I can say one thing, I do get quite cynical with the whole industry, it's very corporate, the kids are being sold by rock and roll through MTV, and it's quite crass, and there's certain things I wouldn't do, like they wanted to do something Mr. and Mrs. on VH1, home with the stars with celebrities kinds of things, Big Brother, I mean I am not a media whore. I wouldn't want to do that, I mean the most important thing, I mean I love the groups like Sparks, who for years are still making fantastic music until now. The only way you can drive your frustration or your kind of like distaste of the whole thing is by making music. People who carry on making music against all odds, they are the best, I think.

Yes, by not being sidetracked with things like "Big Brother" good god. I recently just watched your video for "Crazy" and thought that was highly creative and unique, in certain scenes you're in a straight jacket, you are fenced in, you are out of reach of this faceless/lover. What was your idea behind this symbolic display?

Really, this had nothing to do with me. We met up with these two guys including Alan Alb who was suggested by the step-mom of Phillip Larsen. It's all computer generated graphics-and they were like real fans, and I really loved their work, so really it was a marriage of the two. When we had our first meeting, I told them that it was really about fellatio. You know the sort, of crazy, you know. My favorite line in the song, "pulled me up to the wire" sort of reminded me of like a chase scene maybe in New York by a gang of Latinos, which is quite homo-erotic, really. I quite like it because it kind of reminds me of Guantanamo Bay, just reminds me that there are still people there being held without trial.

You seem to delve more into the disco realm more on this album, do you want to comment on that?

Well, really that is really where I am most at home. I have electric in my blood, obviously, I've been working with Vince for so long, and also as a teenager my favorite bands were Japan, Blondie, Siouxsie and the Banshees-so it's always been there. I always wanted to do a pure, dance record. I remember the first gay club that I went to, I was greeted on the dance floor by the songs of Donna Summer, so ever since then I've just wanted to do my version of that thing she does.

I find myself listening to this album while driving and longing for a dance floor, it just makes you want to dance. If you could pick a specific moment

in your career or before you met up with Vince Clarke that depicts your struggle for success as an artist, what would that be?

I've always made the most of what I've got, really. I mean I used to live in a house of social workers, and it was like a squat kind of thing, they were all working, I was kind of unemployed living in this shelter, then I got a part time job, but that was my ultimate goal was to join a band and make music. Do live gigs, that's what it was. I always had Vince Clarke in my mind's eye, like every time I did demos I would think, which was really only over a two year period, and when I answered that ad, (the ad Vince placed to find a musician to collaborate with) I thought, "Wow, this is unbelievable," something I had in my mind's eye the whole time. I met him, and thought well, have a really good day whatever happens, enjoy the audition, and then they called and said, "Do you want the job?" And I said, "Yes!!"

That is inspiring to hear, to just shut the world out, focus on your passion and continue to keep on keeping on with your dreams in your mind's eye. Thank you so much for your time. I thoroughly enjoy each and every song on this album, and I look forward to your next tour.

Yes, I will be just DJ'ing on tour soon.

Thank you again, take care, and congratulations again.

Thank you.