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Okta Logue (GER)

Single: **Devil's Dance**

Release: **01.03.2019**

Album: **Runway Markings**

Release: **31.05.2019**



oh, isn't it a pity that we mostly dance alone

What will remain once you leave everything behind? Once you cut the grand gestures, the pressure, the expectations? What will remain when you just are? Oh, a hell of a lot. It is then that a distillate is showing – the thing that really counts. Pantha rhei, the ancient Greeks called it. “**Runway Markings**”, **Okta Logue** call it. And with it, they will change the music year of 2019 more that they are currently aware of.

Okta Logue have crossed the sea of Psychedelia and truly swim free now. The shore they reached is their very own island of bliss, a place that makes brothers **Benno Herz** (vocals, bass) and **Robert Herz** (drums), **Philip Meloi** (guitars) and **Max Schneider** (organ, synths) sound as natural, as animated, as serenely balanced as never before. However, it also made them sound as thoughtful and weary as never before. Still, a lot of people were pretty sure that after the both highly successful and highly mesmerising predecessor “**Diamonds and Despair**” (2016) the German four-piece would continue their way through elaborate retro sounds, bittersweet harmonies and Indie Rock quite a little further. Instead, **Okta Logue** fast forward their own evolution. With “**Chocolate and Soda**”, they already in 2017 proved that we're about to witness just another pupation and transformation.

In ten otherworldly minutes, this track sets the mood for the record. Dreamy and hungover, the harmonies lazily, hazily drip into the distance. In a way that sounds like California, yes it does. But not the California you might think of. Instead of sunshine, palm trees and cocktails by the pool, it's more like San Francisco Bay on a foggy morning. Maybe **Pink Floyd** would sound like that had they lived in California. And that's no coincidence: It was “**Atom Heart Mother**” of all his dad's records that made a lasting impression on vocalist Benno Herz. “After ‘Diamonds and Despair’ we were looking for a new sound”, Herz recalls. With his instantly recognizable, delicate voice he could carry the band alone. He doesn't have to, but it's a nice to have. “Thus, we pondered the question what's really us.” The song “Chocolate and Soda”, he says, was written almost coincidentally and quickly became a key moment for the new record.

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The fact that Okta Logue will sound like Okta Logue no matter what they do is some kind of boon and bane. “By now, however, we know how much it’s worth.” And they should be: Okta Logue have such a distinctive sound, they would even be recognizable as an Electro project or a Jazz band. “In the past, our music was not shy of big Rock and pathos moments”, the singer summarizes the evolution. “We wanted to replace that with a relaxed attitude and a deep sense of calmness. We wanted to renounce the grand Rock and Roll gesture.”

Everything is easy with pathos and bombast – nothing is more apparent in the loud world of Rock and Roll. Without the common delusions of grandeur, however, you really have to come up with something. With something like “Runway Markings”. In the recent past, only the **Arctic Monkey** were able to pull off something like this with their “**Tranquillity Base Hotel and Casino**”. Yet, “Runway Markings” is no calm, no shy record. Quite the contrary, in fact. It is radiating dynamics, it is captivating, exhilarating, is growing into crescendos and welcomes in with an utterly holistic aura. Bred and raised in Hamburg’s own **Clouds Hill Studio**, Okta Logue consciously left enough room for ideas to spread, for spontaneity, for spur of the moment things. “We wanted the songs to retain an untamed, uncontrollable edge. We simply watched where we would go once we stopped thinking everything through.”

The recordings with producer **Johann Scheerer (Peter Doherty, At the Drive In, Omar Rodriguez Lopez)** were what Herz calls a “very intimate process”: “Recording at Clouds Hill with Johann was a fantastic experience. We had our very own apartment under the studio and were practically making music nonstop. No distractions, pure focus.” **Scheerer** proved the perfect guy for the sound, as Herz says: “Too well produced for a live album and yet sounding as if we play right next to you.”

Such a **JJ Cale** coolness can’t be learned. And of course this is where the Hessian band greatly profits from experience. Three records, US tours and gigs at the most renowned showcase festivals earned Okta Logue an immaculate reputation that they now live up to with progress instead of stagnation. “I wanted to write about life more tangibly”, Herz states. “For example, ‘**River Street**’ is about the rough area in Frankfurt where I live, a place full of tragic souls with tragic stories. In the past, we have been partying a lot, in retrospect rather debauched, I must say. But when a close friend falls prey to that hedonistic lifestyle, the fun is over pretty soon.” hence the album title, “Runway Markings”: “Did I miss my runway?”, the band asks and is weaving these thoughts into fragile, dark poetry.

In total, an album emerges which couldn’t be more intense, more thoughtful and more timeless. A far cry from any trend, from any spare time nostalgic. “I don’t like the idea copying a certain decade”, Herz muses. “Bands that sound and look exactly as if it was 1967 tend to bore me.” There is a better way to do it: With a dissonant piano tune and a vocal **John Lennon** homage, the intro “**Yesterday’s Ghost**” sets the stage for a deeply felt, grand work of music. Dreamy and right from another world (“**River Street**” with its **Knopfler** leads), lost in exuberant jams (“**Chocolate and Soda**”), seductively poppy (“**Devil’s Dance**”), a **Billy Joel** manifesto with bar piano and savvy sax (“**The Wheel**”), dedicated to the very essence of Seventies Rock (“**In Every Stream Home A Heartache**”) or, in the title track, wonderfully chimeric between Funk, Lounge Pop, melancholic guitars and a voice to die for: A lucky bag indeed. But for once one without disappointments.

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“**Runway Markings**” is nothing but a salubrious piece of music, an album covering the listener like a blanket. Already after a few spins, it feels like an old friend, like a soul mate. Remarkably enough, **Okta Logue** pull off such a feat without an outcry, without alarm or bombast – and release the most touching tunes German Indie culture came up with in the recent past.

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