



“While we were writing ‘Clouds,’ we missed our life on the road, mainly the constantly changing skies from the van windows. The van is where Martin and I start most of our songs, and without all the inspiration that a variety of skies offers, we felt stuck at home, painfully learning why traveling is so important to us.”

— Calin Peters, core member of The Ballroom Thieves

The Ballroom Thieves will perform Friday at Volcanic Theatre Pub in Bend.

Shervin Lainez/Submitted photo

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Their longtime drummer left for other pursuits, and an empty tour schedule gave them time to solidify a new lineup and record an excellent new album, “Clouds,” which is slated for a July release. In an interview conducted as they were headed our way, Peters said they’re feeling “extremely reinvigorated and optimistic about all the newness, with a set full of unreleased songs, new singles and our favorite updated and reimagined Thieves oldies.”

Here’s the rest of our conversation with Peters, edited for space and clarity.

GO!: “Clouds” sounds like a departure from your previous work: Moodier, more deliberate, more psychedelic pop, less string-based, less vocal-forward. What’s behind

this shift?

Calin Peters: Our goal with “Clouds” was to speak more plainly about the topics we think so much about (mental health, being a human in an inhumane world, missing the road), so we wanted the arrangements to support our attempt to be more straightforward. We stayed away from lush strings and instead focused on lead guitar hooks and more linear song structures. We had a great time incorporating synth into most of the tracks for the first time, so there are definitely some wild swirly parts. We were also so happy to have Tucker Martine mix most of the record, and he pulled out some trippy sounds we didn’t even realize we had recorded, especially on “Trodden.”

In terms of the vocals, we were excited to sing in the duo format, the way we had grown to love during the lockdown. We moved away from the lead vocal with big supportive harmony and found that singing in octaves, unison and tight harmony was very fun and effortless, just the way we wanted “Clouds” to feel. All things must evolve, and for us, it was time to refine our sound and keep only what still suited us.

GO!: Are there any bands or albums or other works of art (or anything at all, really) that you feel have influenced your sound on “Clouds”?

CP: While we were writing “Clouds,” we missed our life on the road, mainly the constantly changing skies from the van windows. The van is where Martin and I start most of our songs, and without all the in-

If You Go

What: The Ballroom Thieves and Lady Lamb, with Riddy Arman

When: 8 p.m. Friday

Where: Volcanic Theatre Pub, 70 SW Century Drive, Bend

Cost: \$18

Contact: volcanictheatre.com.

spiration that a variety of skies offers, we felt stuck at home, painfully learning why traveling is so important to us. During that time at home (when income was minimal), I took a job watching over an art gallery during the slow winter months of Maine. I often walked around, stopping to admire skies painted by artists from the 17th century to the present day, and thought a lot about how artists have been trying to interpret the beauty of the world around them forever and how we are no different.

GO!: You’ve said “the road offers us structure” that is important to the band and the songwriting. Could you expand on what kind of structure it offers and why you need it?

CP: The two of us often talk about how the traditional “album cycle” of a recording artist is satisfying and productive. It mimics seasonal living in that the seasons dictate different parts of the job. The spring is for beginnings, big tours and work. The sum-

mer is for festivals, which are full of energy and celebration. The fall is for more hard touring, finishing out a busy year and tying up loose ends, and the winter is meant for recording albums and resting safely at home and off the snowy roads. The heavy touring months gave us a lot of that inspiration and songwriting time I talked about before, and during the past two years without that whole cycle, we felt aimless. After a bunch of difficult early lockdown months, we were able to fight through the confusion and write the remaining 75% of “Clouds,” and having the chance to record in the early summer was a special experience that certainly contributed to the vibe of the record and the fresh start of 2022.

GO!: What did the break from touring over the past couple of years teach you about your relationship to touring?

CP: The problem with the seasonal cycle of a 10-year-old band is that it leaves little room to decide if you really even want to be in a band. There is always something coming up a few months out, and it’s challenging to get off the train. In that regard, the break was a positive experience. We needed the rest, and it gave us an option to stop, which we had never had before. It turns out we didn’t want to stop at all, and we cannot wait to be back in the special town of Bend very soon!

■ Ben Salmon is a Bend-based music journalist and host of *Left Of The Dial*, which airs 8-10 p.m. Thursdays on KPOV, 88.9 FM and streams at kpv.org. You can find him on Bandcamp and Twitter at @bcsalmon.



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