

Archive - Darius Keeler About "Call To Arms & Angels", Genres, Influences & Red Lines



On April 13th 2022, we had the opportunity to meet *Darius Keeler*, one of the two masterminds behind the music collective called Archive, for an online interview. What was supposed to be a talk about the new album „Call To Arms & Angels“, quickly developed into rather natural a conversation about music itself, genres, influences and red lines.

Zur deutschen Übersetzung des Interviews

All english interviews on [BetreutesProggen.de](https://betreutesproggen.de)

flohfish for BP:

In a bit more than two weeks your new album „Call To Arms & Angels“ will see the light of the world. It's your first new album in six years. What has taken you so long? I know you were quite busy with the „25“-Box. Was that everything that

has taken your time or what is the reason behind it?

Darius Keeler:

I think we kind of did so much, we are quite prolific I suppose in Archive over the years we kind of did an album a year or every two years for the last 20 years. Eleven albums we have done. That is just studio albums. We have also done acoustic and soundtrack stuff. At the end of the last album we just needed a break from new material to have a retrospective which is kind of a celebration. Thats when we did the „25“. Obviously that took a lot of time, compiling and getting that whole project together. It was a three year kind of project. Before we knew it, it was six years since we had released an album. It is the longest time you have ever waited for a new record. You know, it is a good thing sometimes.

And you came up with a double album. That's a new thing in a way. When you listen to it, it takes quite some time to get through. You first have to digest it. It is a lot to take in at once. Why have you made this decision? Some of that music must have been ready earlier. You could have made two albums or maybe something like you did with „Controlling Crowds“. Why that decision to put out so much? Did you release everything you had or was there even more?



Archive, 31.10.19, Köln, E-Werk

Credit: flohfish

I think, we really wanted to tell a story of what was kind of

a reflection of what was going on in the last two years. Obviously the world has turned upside down in many ways. Not just the pandemic. The political environment around the world. Everything seemed to become very shocking. We really wanted to reflect that in the record. There were so many different emotions for the band. Different colours that we were seeing, feeling and experiencing. We wanted to tell that story. We had many more songs. We had about 30 or 35 songs. Just in the period of that year we wrote. From January to May the following year. In just over a year we wrote about 35 songs.

That's impressive!

Exactly. We always wanted to do a double album but I don't think we ever had the material to justify it. Because I never do something just for the sake of it. It would have to be something I felt was substantial and told the right story. I think that's why we did it now.

For me personally Archive is kind of the definition of progressive music. Not in the meaning of the style, like „You Look All The Same To Me“. Or concerning the matter of concept albums, like you did with „Controlling Crowds“. But in the true meaning of the word. You have done everything in the past: Ambient, Electronic, Trip Hop, Industrial, Progressive Rock, Shoegaze, Hip Hop. I don't know what genre you haven't touched yet. Where do you see yourself as a musician who has actually come from House music. Where do you see the new album in this light?

I never really think ourselves as a multi-genre band. Obviously, when *Rosko* (*John*, Editor's note) was in the band we had Rap. But it always just feels like Archive. We kind of got so many influences between us but we always kind of approach the way we work the same way. We don't think we gonna do a Hip Hop tune. We kind of just have all the guys and we get into something and we want to tell a story with all the songs that we do. And that's what it is, really. I think we love to tell

stories with the way we are writing and put the listeners into a state of where they can see pictures and they can feel things and be emotionally rumbled or moved. Sometimes that can be spoken word, it can be a female singer or a man or whatever it is. I tend to think of Archive as a sort of weird house of freaks who put in a bit of their own style and their own ambitions. That's how we are!

I can only tell, whatever you do... When I listen to „25“, in one way it sounds like I am listening to a sampler, but then, in another way, whatever song you listen to, it sounds exactly like Archive. This is very fascinating.

Exactly. That's what we try. You know, ,cause it is too easy I think. Or take dangers in some ways just to get fixed in a way to one genre. ,Cause it is dangerous for us cause we get really bored. We have always, since the beginning... From the first and the second to the third album. They are all very different. But they did start to have that sort of Archive sound. It has developed into that whatever kind of influences we had. Whatever genre was in my feel. It has that Archive sound. It is interesting and it is interesting for us because we don't have any limits: It is what we can do rather than what we can't do. That's our philosophy with Archive. There ain't any limits!

You are not one of the big players in music but if I see the halls you are playing you are quite successful with what you are doing. And the audience is very diverse. From ravers to metallers you can basically see everything.

Well, that's it. It is hard to really be commercial when you write the kind of music we do. It is very difficult on radio etc. But what you do get is a kind of slightly cultesque following. Our fans are very dedicated I would say. As a musician, creatively... I mean, look: being a huge band and being commercial has amazing things about it. Like people who

have been very successful and obviously the freedom it gives with their life. But they don't necessarily have as much creative freedom as we do. And I wouldn't swap that for anything. There is no-one who has any say in what we do. We have the total say on all the music and the journeys we create. It is all down to us. We don't have any boundaries in that respect. So we are very free creatively. The price of that is that you don't necessarily get 18 million... (inaudible, Editor's note).

But in a way you always had this creative freedom. When I listen to your albums... probably it was less in the beginning.



That's how we started. That's our perimeters.

Can you live from your music?

Yeah, yeah. Four sure. We have been very lucky. Obviously the last two years have been very difficult because we lost a lot of money through it. Festivals and all sorts. It was very difficult. For the first time *Dave* (*Pen*, Editor's note) and *Pollard* (*Berrier*, Editor's note) had to work a bit and doing other stuff. But over 25 years we have just been doing music. And I am sure, once we get on tour, once things get started, get going again with this album and touring and stuff I think we will be back on track. We've been so lucky. We have done

this all our lives without having to get a normal job. I am not gonna complain. There are musicians who are far more talented than me, who haven't made money in their lives. I feel very blessed in that way. It is what it is. You have to go with the world problems. And that affects everyone. Not just musicians.

I haven't been able to listen so much to the new album yet. But it has again a different feeling I think. For me, what was a bit striking is that it is very rich in contrast. On one side the album is very reduced in sound. There is a lot of piano and just voice passages. But on the other side, beat-wise it is one of the most driving ones I have heard in a long time. At least in a couple of songs. Neraly like ou wanna go back to the clubs. I think, if you play some of the songs in a club in Berlin you would have the party going crazy. Was this planned? This is kind of coming full circle with your past in club music.

I suppose, obviously I didn't think of it. I think, just you know, to... Working with *Lisa* (*Mottram*, Editor's note), having *Lisa* was... I think the most driving sort of song in that respect was 'The Crown'. And that was a very complicated song to write because, if you listen carefully to all the time signatures. I don't even know how to explain how I came up with the music. I was really experiencing with the speed of things I had been going through. I was trying to kind of speed up and slow down the kind of mood of it.

It's a kind of wake up call. Before it the songs are a bit slower and this is really waking you up again.

Yeah, exactly. That's right. It was a very unorthodox kind of a song. Just when I work with *Lisa*, just when we really went to town on the end part, I just wanted, I needed that beat, that driving dirty fucking beat. And then when *Smiley* (*Steve Barnard*, Editor's note) came in as well, it gave you that real life. So, there are quite a few moments like that on the album

where it really kicks off, you know. When it really starts to drive and I love that. That's what Archive is about man. The silence and the noise.

And in a way, like yo've said. Even if you can't count time signatures, you can feel that. This contrast is very to the point and very upbeat and very much like you wanna go to the dancefloor but than, if you wanna dance to it, it's just impossible. At least not in a cultivated way.

Yeah, exactly.

On the other side, when we look at a song like ,Freedom'. I mean, there are some parts in it, that remind me of Dr. Dre's ,No Diggity', but what was even more striking for me was The Beatles' influence in it. I have never heard you so much to the point referencing another band. That was very striking.

Definitely. The thing is, the second part of ,Freedom', the end part I wrote first with *Lisa* and it is such a moving moment and it is kind of the story of... I think what really struck me about the lockdown. We all had time to reflect on the world. We didn't all have our normal lives. Suddenly everything seemed magnified to me. The people's consciousness and politics and the divisiveness of everything. And I just remember when the *George Floyd* thing happened. It was just such a disturbing moment to see that happen. And that is what it is just about. How freedom for a lot of people in the West is very curved. It's not really the same freedom and that's quite a hard thing to deal with, if you think about it. I'm not just talking about colour. I'm talking about wealth and all sorts of things that exist in our culture. That makes some people more able to experience freedom. And that was the kind of the feeling of that part of the song and than the first... It wasn't finished in my head cause i thought the first part needed to be the kind of the other side of freedom, the opulence. The real freedom. The people who actually really enjoy what freedom is.

The ones who don't even know that they have it.

Exactly that mate. The complete freedom of everything. The power they have. And we all live in that society and we all vote. It is a crazy thing. In America you have such huge vast of the black communities. In America they all vote. Their vote means Fuckk all! Cause their lives never improve and they don't have any freedom. I find that pretty disturbing. It makes you feel, to be honest, it makes you feel guilt. It just makes you feel quite sick, really.

I can completely rely to that. When you are talking about the new album, the influences have all been things you witnessed, you felt, which you have experienced. Are there any bands or albums of which you say they have been a main influence on the new album?

I have been listening to so much music. I have a lot going. Such an amount of vinyl.

So you are a musician who still listens to music cause many other artists say ,Not at all anymore – the more music I make, the less I listen to'.

The fact is. I think the music scene at the moment for alternative music is probably stronger than it has ever been. There are so many amazing bands at the moment. Black Midi is one I am completely in love with.

I gonna see them in a month in Cologne...

Lucky you. They are touring... I better try and go to see them. Because that kind of... There was a bit of a periode when Indy music became quite boring I found. But I think that now, at the moment there is a kind of movement of Indie bands that are really progressive as well. You know what I mean?

If I see just what I am covering here...There is Swiss band that is mixing Blues and Gospel and Black Metal. Stuff like this.

There are so many things that haven't been touched. And I always thought, my God, after so many years everything in music is said. But no. We still haven't reached the end. It's amazing.

Absolutely mate. I love it. I get so excited when I hear something new. I just order the vinyl and I just sit and have a smoke. Smoke a joint, a beer, and just get completely immersed in it. And that was certainly my lockdown. I discovered.. Just extraordinary. I've got really good friends of musicians, but not professional musicians if you like. Just people who play music but have a far greater knowledge of music and bands than I have. So more journalistic, like yourself. And they come over and we listen and they play me stuff. And it's like: Wow! I just love it. And I obviously research myself too. It is a very good time for me. I feel blessed. And I am looking forward to doing some festivals. Not this summer but next summer. I am actually trying to see a lot of these bands live.

So Black Midi. Another one you would name?

Oh, I mean, the two Low albums were pretty extraordinary.

Yes, the new one is very disturbing in a way.



I love it. There was a bit of criticism that they maybe it was a bit too... trying to do the same thing, trying to make a

point. But when you actually listen to it a few times, it's just amazing.

This contrast between electronic and glitch on one side and these sweet melodies on the other, that's quite special.

The Haxan Cloak I got into as well. Amazing man, that guy. He is just really kind of downbeat dark. The way he uses sounds. It's kind of like Boards Of Canada. I fucking like Boards Of Canada!

Yes. „Geogaddi“ for me is still one of the best albums of the 90s. It's amazing.

Their last one, „Harvest“. That album fucking blows my mind. The last boards of Canada Record, i think it's „Harvest Moon“ or „Harvest“ („Tomorrow's Harvest“, Editor's note).

I think I haven't heard this, actually...

Oh man, you have to hear, because it's very... Because... Boards Of Canada albums have really got that sound, that they do, you know. But this one kind of goes out of that typical sound. It's slightly different, slightly more emotional. The emotion in their music is very strange. It is like a purgatory kind of.

They remind me always of children's cradle songs but in a creepy electronic way. Whenever I listen to it and my wife come into the room, she gets scared, she wants to get out. She can't stand it. Because it's so creeping under your skin.

Yes, right. Exactly. That's it and that's their sound. But the new record is more emotive, it's very interesting. If it plays, have a listen. I think you'll love it.

But the band you mentioned before?

It's Haxon Cloak. It's a guy. He did the „Midsommar“

Soundtrack. You know this film „Midsommar“?

The Scandinavian Horror movie...

So this guy... It's quite old, the album. But it sounds very fresh. The album cover just got a noose on it („Excavation“, Editor's note).

You have done a lot of different genres. Do you have any red lines? Or can you imagine experimenting with Daeth Metal, Dubstep, growls, grunts, whatever, Jazz. Are there any red lines?

I don't have any limits. You know what I mean? It's for you to say when we've crossed a red line! Not us.

No, I think Archive is all about not having lines.

No, exactly mate.

And for the end: What can we expect from the upcoming tour?

Fucking amazing!

You ave quite some ground to cover, but your „Best Of“ you have basicallay done on the last tour. Are you gonna play the whole new album? Or fan favourites we haven't heard often.

Sure, we gonna do like a live interpretation of the album. It probably won't be every song. But it's gonna be very much of a conceptual first part of the show and in the second part, for the encores we obviously do some old material. We got all the singers coming onto. It's gonna be a huge show.

That was it from my side. I thank you very much. I felt like having a very good conversation with a friend I don't know yet. That was very authentic.

Absolutely, *Florian*. Wonderful. It was a pleasure. Take care!

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Rezension: „Call To Arms & Angels“ (2022)

Rezension: „Versions: Remixed“ (2020)

Rezension: „Versions“ (2020)

Rezension: „25“ (2019)

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