

Music | Bittles' Magazine: The music column from the end of the world

Phil Kieran is something of a musical chameleon. Shifting between tempos and genres with glee, he is a DJ/producer who, over a long and distinguished career has never been content to continuously revisit one sound. From the tough techno of his celebrated EPs on *Soma*, to the low-slung funk of his **Le Carousel** alias, taking in any number of twisted delights in between, Mr Kieran ably fits the definition of master of all trades. By **JOHN BITTLES**

This month sees the release of his brand new album *Blinded By The Sun*. Out now on **Jamie Jones' Hot Creations** imprint, on the record Phil teams up with vocalists **Jess Brien** and **Wilson Magwere** on a collection of songs which bridge the gaps between pop, ambient, funk, indie and house with ease. Opener *Solar Storm* merges the dense, urban rhythms of **Massive Attack** with reggae-infused vocals to send shivers racing up the spine. From here, the album takes a multitude of unexpected twists and turns, yet, somehow, manages to sound great when played as a whole. Highlights include the warm technoid crunch of *Realities Forgotten* and the **Miss Kittin** style electroclash growl of *Make A Change*. Other picks include *Don't Give Up's* lush deep house beats, the acidic squiggle of *No Life*, and the synth-heavy pop of *I Can't Help Myself*. It's all good though, with the album more than warranting repeated plays.



Blinded By The Sun is a pop-infused blast of optimistic beats and grooves. Anyone who has unashamedly shed a tear on the dancefloor while singing along to a **Ten City**, **Masters At Work**, or **Frankie Knuckles** track will likely find themselves misty eyed and nostalgic from the moment *Solar Storm* first kicks in.

In the following interview **Phil Kieran** discusses his new album, working with **Jess Brien** and **Wilson Magwere**, working with the *Creations* label, **Le Carousel**, and lots more.

For those who have never had the pleasure of hearing your music, can you tell us a bit about who you are and what you do?

I have previously released an album on *Cocoon* and under two other monikers **Le Carousel** and **Alloy Mental**. I have remixed people like **Depeche Mode**, **Nitzer Ebb**, **Andrew Weatherall**, **David Holmes** and many many more.

Your new album *Blinded By The Sun* came out on the 7th of October. What was the idea behind the LP?

It's an honest look at the slightly darker side of nightlife and the real experiences that people have.

If you could pick one track to sell the album which would it be and why?

It's difficult to choose, but I would pick *Don't Give Up* because I'm happy with the results sonically and emotionally. Everyone seems to pick a different track but that's cool with me, in fact I quite like that.

Solar Storm, the album's atmospheric opening track features spoken word vocals by **Wilson Magwere** who is originally from Zimbabwe. What's the story behind this song? And, was it always destined to be the album's first track?

Yes it was always intended to be the opening track from the start. I've used the sun as a thread throughout the record. Wilson delivers it in a way that I never could, whilst the idea came from me he gives it the mystery I was looking for.



Vocalist **Jess Brien** contributes vocals to nine of the album's ten tracks. How did you two meet, and what made you decide to work together?

It was a chance meeting in a venue called the *Limelight Belfast*. We were out in the smoking area and we just happened to get talking. She told me she was a singer and I asked her to send me a demo, a few days later I got a couple of tracks and I just loved the sound of her voice. We tried one track and it really worked so just kept going.

One of my favourite tracks on the album is the slow burn groove of *Realities Forgotten*. Can you tell us a bit about how this song came about?

I can just imagine somebody doing exactly that. Maybe forgetting the reality of that moment or just the reality of life - losing yourself in the music as a means of escape.

The album is coming out on **Jamie Jones'** Hot Creations imprint. How did you first hook up with them?

Me and Jamie have kept in touch over the years and he has always been playing tracks of mine. I guess he likes what I do and when I approached him with the album half finished he decided it would be cool to put it out on *Hot Creations*.

When you look back over your previous releases can you think of a thread, idea, or a sound that unites them?

I try to make my music as varied as possible so I'm not repeating myself, I always like to feel like I'm trying new things otherwise I get bored. I'm sure there are things that connect the music from my past but if there is it's not intentional.

Your *Le Carousel* album from 2013 is still a firm favourite of mine. Do you have any plans to revisit the project anytime soon?

Yes! That's the next project, and I have already started a bunch of new stuff for it, so I am looking forward to getting stuck in.

You are well known for your scintillating DJ sets. What is the secret to rocking a club?

Oh why thank you, I find the best nights are when the music changes or evolves, I've never really been a fan of just playing the same vibe all night. For me I have to feel something special about each track before playing it.

Every track has to say something special.

If a DJ plays a fantastic set yet no-one is dancing, have they really played a great set?

I guess sometimes people can be playing to the wrong crowd or they expect something different from the DJ. I guess it depends on the kind of music they are playing and what stage of the night, personally I like to see people having as much fun as possible but I like to get into their heads.

What five records are working for you right now?

Sven Väth - *OFF* (Roman Flügel mix)

Pearson Sound - *XLB*

Daniel Avery - *Clear* (Abdulla Rashim Remix)

Rose - *Levitate*

Sigha - *New Puritan*



You were born in Belfast, and in the album's press notes you say "I grew up in Northern Ireland and was surrounded by hate and love at the same time, and yet we always used music to escape hatred and bigotry. Ultimately love and music can win". How big an effect do you think Belfast has had on the music that you create?

Punk and techno are such a big part of Belfast and still to this day is part of who I am.

What five places in Belfast would you recommend for visitors to check out?

Botanic Gardens.

Cathedral Quarter.

The MAC.

Giants Ring.

St Georges Market.

Do you have any final words for our readers?

I'm doing a really cool secret location party for the album launch on the 15th October. Buses leave from the side of Belfast city hall at 7:45pm and return to the same spot 3am. Tickets and info on my website www.philkieranmusic.com

Blinded By The Sun should be available in your local record emporium and download stores. If you're feeling a bit lazy though you can just follow this [link](#).

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)