

The Mekons

"The Mekons are the most revolutionary group in the history of rock 'n' roll" – wrote rock critic Lester Bangs. This genre-defying collective emerged from the 1977 British punk scene, where the Mekons progressed from socialist art students with no musical skills to the prolific, raucous progeny of Hank Williams. Theirs is an improbable history – a surprising and influential embrace of folk and country music; with occasional forays into the art world (collaborations with Vito Acconci and Kathy Acker). The Mekons continue to make bold, unpredictable music while staying true to the punk ethos. Their mind-boggling output consistently blurs the lines between high art and low and they remain one of the truly great live bands.

Emboldened by a sold-out tour and a surge of interest in the States after the release of the documentary *Revenge of the Mekons*, the band retreated to the fringes of Joshua Tree National Park and popular culture to record their new album *Deserted*.

Cinematic and widescreen in its sonic scope and with a live band immediacy, *Deserted* is the Mekons at their finest. And whether you are up against yourself, or an entire system, the indifferent stars still shimmer above, while rage, humor and irony are usually on the same side of the Mekons coin.

From the onrushing sunrise squall of "Lawrence of California," the album plays like the soundtrack to a movie of flames, romance, dissolution, and destruction. Jon Langford's prickly and jagged guitar, angry pub singalong exhortations, and Susie Honeyman's Middle Eastern-touched fiddle make the song a distorted lodestar for the journey. With the rhythms and atmospherics of Steve Goulding (drums), Dave Trumfio (bass), and Rico Bell (accordion/vocals) as a foundation, the album is full of space; never claustrophobic, but often susceptible to the blurry hallucinations on the horizon. Tom Greenhalgh's parched vocals on "HARAR 1883" and "How Many Stars?" add a mournful sense of fragility to the disoriented traveler, while Sally Timms' dream-like voice turns "Into The Sun" into an oasis—the incantations at the end rising as a shield. On "In The Desert," Timms is a bulwark against the cruelty that awaits beyond pools. Throughout, Lu Edmonds' obscure stringed instruments are as psilocybinally piercing as Peter O'Toole's blue eyes.

Deserted is folk music made by folks who are pissed and disillusioned, lost and longing to be found, but only on their terms.