

EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE, BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK (AND WERE GOING TO ASK ANYWAY)

Broken Social Scene was born in downtown Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

It began in 1999 with two newfound friends, Kevin Drew and Brendan Canning, making beautiful music together in basements and bedrooms.

Drew had already recorded an album with Charles Spearin of Do Make Say Think under the name KC Accidental called *Anthems for the Could've Bin Pills* (released on Noise Factory Records in 2000); Drew also briefly joined Do Make Say Think for a fall 2000 European tour, but he was never a full-time member of the band.

Canning had been a member of several prominent Canadian rock bands in the 1990s, including hHead, Len and By Divine Right, however, by the late '90s, his dissatisfaction with the Canadian music industry had led him to give up playing in bands and become an active DJ in Toronto's after-hours scene. His union with Drew in Broken Social Scene marked his return to playing live music (though he continues to DJ regularly).

The first Broken Social Scene performance occurred on December 17, 2000 at Ted's Wrecking Yard in Toronto, as part of the weekly Wavelength music series; it was billed as "John Tesh Jr. and the Broken Social Scene." The show consisted of Drew performing a single solo piece on synthesizer and guitar, improvising melodies over the course of 30 minutes.

During winter 2000/2001 Drew and Canning completed the first Broken Social Scene album, *Feel Good Lost*. Though primarily a collaboration between the two, the album did feature guest contributions from vocalist Leslie Feist (who played with Canning in By Divine Right), drummer Justin Peroff and trombonist Evan Cranley (a member of Toronto/Montreal romantic pop band Stars).

On January 26, 2001, Broken Social Scene played its first full-band performance, with Drew and Canning backed by Feist, Peroff and guitarist Andrew Whiteman, a Toronto music-scene veteran who performed solo as The Apostle of Hustle. Unlike the mellow, abstract instrumentals heard on *Feel Good Lost*, the live incarnation of Broken Social Scene featured boisterous indie-rock songs complete with melodic vocal hooks. Even though *Feel Good Lost* was about to be released (in Feb. 2001), Broken Social Scene were already performing early versions of songs like "KC Accidental" and "Lover's Spit," both of which would resurface on 2002's *You Forgot It In People*.

Over the course of 2001, Broken Social Scene — at this point, a creative core featuring Drew, Canning, Whiteman, Spearin and Peroff — played many shows in Toronto, each being radically different from the previous. Line-ups would expand and contract around this core, depending on who was available to join in. The revolving support cast included Feist, Cranley, Emily Haines and James Shaw of Metric; John Crossingham of Raising the Fawn, and Bill Priddle of Treble Charger. Studio sessions would even find Jessica Moss of A Silver Mt Zion quickly dropping in give some musical love. Each new face brought a new dimension to the sound. Some shows were blissful space-rock excursions, some were dub-soul massage sessions with full horn sections, others were chaotic feedback frenzies. In the summer of 2001, the band even temporarily changed its name to Do the 95 to indulge in their noise-rock affinities.

(As a side note: at no point was Broken Social Scene ever conceived as a "supergroup." Yes, many of the participants were affiliated with other renowned Toronto indie bands, however, pretty much every band features people who once belonged to other bands, so by that token, every band must be a supergroup. Broken Social Scene is, always has and always will be a group of friends and loves.)

In winter 2001 through to summer 2002, Broken Social Scene and their revolving cast of friends shackled up in producer Dave Newfeld's Stars and Sons studio to record their second album, *You Forgot It In People*, and much like their live shows, the sounds of the songs transformed as the line-up changed from day to day. Leslie sang on "Almost Crimes" and "Shampoo Suicide" before she left to tour Europe with her friends Peaches and Gonzales. Emily sang on "Anthems for a Seventeen Year-Old Girl" and James played guitar on "Almost Crimes" before their band Metric relocated to L.A. in March 2002. While Spearin's obligations to Do Make Say Think limited his live appearances with Broken Social Scene, much like Dave Fridmann with Mercury Rev, he was still a crucial creative figurehead in the studio; the song "KC Accidental" was named after Drew and Spearin's previous band collaboration. "Stars and Sons" was named after Newfeld's studio, a tribute to the producer's intense efforts in harnessing all these different sounds and players into a cohesive whole.

You Forgot It In People was released in October 2002 as a joint effort between two emergent Toronto indie labels: Paper Bag Records and Broken Social Scene's own Arts & Crafts imprint, a venture between Drew and his former roommate Jeffrey Remedios. The album was an immediate critical success in Toronto, selling out its initial run of 1,000 copies in a month. To capitalize on this attention and to meet the demand, Broken Social Scene broke its ties with Paper Bag to expand its Arts & Crafts label, first with a national distribution deal with EMI Music Canada and then — after a glowing review in influential online music site Pitchforkmedia.com — a U.S. distribution deal through Caroline.

With greater success, of course, comes greater touring demands, however, putting a band as amorphous as Broken Social Scene on the road has not been as difficult as one may think. Upon releasing *You Forgot It In People*, Toronto guitarist Jason Collett joined the core line-up of Drew, Canning, Whiteman and Peroff, while frequent tours with Stars has allowed the band to enlist Cranley on guitar and trombone, as well as Stars keyboardist/French Horn player Chris Seligman and vocalists Amy Millan and Torquil Campbell. Likewise, Broken Social Scene has been able to organize their tours around Feist and Metric's schedules so as to integrate their talents into the live presentation.

In early 2003, praise for Broken Social Scene quickly spread outside of Toronto, across Canada — the band took home the Best Alternative Album Award at the 2003 Juno Awards — and then south of the border into America. In March 2003, the band played to a packed house at the South by Southwest festival; the American release of *You Forgot It In People* followed in June. By summer of 2003, following positive notices in Rolling Stone and SPIN, Broken Social Scene were playing sold-out shows all over America, while a new U.K. license deal with Vertigo/Mercury brought the band to the England and France's Route du Rock festival. The band capped a very successful 2003 with a sold-out show at New York's Bowery Ballroom for the CMJ festival and two sold-out shows at Toronto's Phoenix Concert Theatre.

So far, 2004 has seen Broken Social Scene giving their new fans around the world a chance to play catch-up with their past. Arts & Crafts has recently re-released *Feel Good Lost* in America, while March 18 sees the North American release of *Bee Hives*, a collection of old material dating back to the band's inception, as well as some U.K.-only B-sides from 2003. While Broken Social Scene continue to tour (their spring 2004 schedule takes them to South by Southwest again and California's Coachella Festival) and plot the follow-up to *You Forgot It In People*, the band's Arts & Crafts label continues to grow internationally. In 2003, A&C released Stars' Canadian hit *Heart* and Jason Collett's solo album *Motor Motel Love Songs* to American audiences. This year, the label introduced us to Valley of the Giants' *Westworld*, a special collaboration featuring Canning, Spearin, Anthony Seck of The Shalabi Effect, Sophie Trudeau of Godspeed/A Silver Mt. Zion and Deidre Smith of Strawberry. Upcoming Arts & Crafts releases include the debut from Whiteman's Apostle of Hustle alias and the new solo album from Feist. The label also has plans to relaunch the band in Europe after a mutual parting with Mercury/Vertigo.

Many people wonder how a band as constantly in flux as Broken Social Scene can hold it together amid the rigorous demands of becoming a major international touring band. But, really, the recipe is simple: close friends, a lot of love and a mutual desire to transcend the ennui and ugliness of our day-to-day lives by creating something beautiful and timeless together. And share it with you. That's the only plan this band has ever had. And it's the only one it needs.

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