



Gord Downie, The Sadies, And The Conquering Sun begins with “Crater”, a ragged anthem that erupts with frayed guitar and thundering rhythm. Dallas and Travis Good’s trudging riffs light the low-slung growl of Gord Downie:

Hello there / Gentle Son / A crater / We’re creating!

“Crater” is an arrival: the mission statement of a young band unhinged, igniting ten songs of visceral punk rock exultation. **Gord Downie, The Sadies, And The Conquering Sun** is a spirited exploration of the darkness surrounding daylight, a rallying cry from the Secret Museum of Mankind:

Crater! / Getting crushed in our dreams / Or in our dreams / Doing all the crushing

Downie’s words burn in unison with the charging Sadies, the mantra of a band forged out of primal necessity. This album is a vital, reckless, and ecstatic moment, gleaming with the proud imperfections of a group discovering its voice.

It came together urgently but slowly, after the long-time Toronto friends first recorded together for Lake Ontario Waterkeepers in 2006. Fleeting sessions over the next seven years yielded finished songs in immediate, alchemical takes. **Gord Downie, The Sadies, And The Conquering Sun** is the action of first-thought-best-thought.

The project’s namesake, “The Conquering Sun” fuses The Sadies’ rusted psychedelia with Downie’s humble, volatile wail. Mike Belitsky’s roiling drums, and Sean Dean’s sure, standing bass spur the band through uncharted desert-scapes.

Working the fugitive dust / Under the conquering sun / Nature, please be good to us / Under the conquering sun

Each song brims with energy, electricity embellishing a simple, rustic core. Acoustic inflections are cached in the album’s array of fiery environments, staggering in its balance of ferocity and craft.

Downie cries out possessed on “It Didn’t Start To Break My Heart Until This Afternoon”: a pulsating blast of brash guitars and fuzzed-out gnarl.

Drive it like we stole it / Through the snowflakes, into the cold of the sun

On “Budget Shoes”, guitars shine over the tumbling bedrock of desolate but hopeful imagism. Downie writes in a universal voice, with a chorus taunting shadow from light. On “Los Angeles Times”, nations gather under that conquering blaze, singing unanimous poetry of promise and provocation:

Raise a glass of hope / Raise a glass of liberty / And a glass of something else / May we be at ease with ourselves!

The Sadies’ effortlessly invoke this primitive emotion, intuiting Downie’s themes with rollicking instrumental passages. On “Devil Enough”, Downie’s solemn musings are liberated by The Sadies’ roving plainsong; sobering internal sentiment brought to life with the flame of improvisation:

You’re making me drop things / I can’t hold my cup / My state of being / Isn’t what it was / The light the light / And my eyes adjust / What’s for sure is Devil Enough

“One Good Fast Job” sneers like a siren, blunt guitars circling Downie’s snarl. “Demand Destruction” pops with environmental pressure, coaxing an answer to a nuclear dilemma:

And as the sun went down behind the shadow / Of this invisible war / You say, “Is this accident ever over anymore?”



Gord Downie, The Sadies, And The Conquering Sun spans depths and ages in its relentless half-hour, before concluding on an only note of reprieve. “Saved” dwells in the light of darkness, capturing our silent vibration of debt to the source. The album’s last moments glint in the rapturous calm of collective awe:

You say nothing can be saved / It all goes away / Darkness falls and colours fade / And the music gets so loud it flaps your pant legs

Gord Downie, The Sadies, And The Conquering Sun boils with hope and irreverence; toils with fire as a tool and a curse. This is the combustion of brotherhood and dissent: music of wisdom and innocence:

It is the work, day is your word, night is the glue.

by Jonathan Shedletzky