

As of spring 2010, Blake Sennett, had quit music. Abandoned it completely. No more Rilo Kiley, no more The Elected. The former guitarist and songwriter focused his efforts elsewhere, writing and directing a short film, moving out of his house of 12 years, and taking in a rescue dog affectionately named "The Baby". Music was a thing of the past, an afterthought. Dead and gone.

So why is there a new record by The Elected, titled *Bury Me in My Rings*, set to be released through Vagrant Records (former home of The Get Up Kids, current home to PJ Harvey) on May 17th? Did Blake struggle in his new endeavors, find failure in the harsh realm of the film industry? Is he making his return to the world of music defeated, tail between his legs, scratching at the back door of his past successes?

The answer, one simply finds, is no. Agents were found, meetings were taken, and a script was in development. The wheels turned with an ease few in pursuit of cinematic relevance ever encounter. It was simply the interest of friend and colleague Jason Cupp that culled Blake from the depths and had him writing again. Jason, the man that mixed The Elected's previous effort, *Sun, Sun, Sun*, suggested an impromptu recording session. Blake had no material, no songs to explore, but Cupp insisted. Pressure free, no expectations. These initial recordings sired what would become the album's opening track, "Born to Love You," a 3 minute ode to the majesty of determined love. The song came relatively easy, quick, and most importantly, reminded Sennett of the overall joy that music making can and should provide.

He was having fun again, so the feature film was put on hold in order to finish what months before he couldn't conceive: A new Elected album. Familiar faces contributed (longtime Elected guitarist Mike Bloom, the aforementioned Cupp, Bright Eyes' Mike Mogis), but this album differed from past experience, with fewer initial collaborators. "At first, I just played all the instruments myself," Blake comments. "I just thought, may as well take it as far as I can alone...then I brought in my friends to fill in the blanks."

The results stand as a singular vision, in what is The Elected's strongest work to date. For longtime listeners, there are new sounds to enjoy, such as the mid 70's Bowie bounce of "Go For The Throat," or the calculated "Miss You" era Stones cum Early Talking Heads groove of "Babyface." Signature tones remain, and can be found on the island sunset serenade "Trip Round the World," with the melodic slide of the lap steel, the comforting pluck of a ukulele, offering new ears a sense of what's come before.

None of this serves as departure or retread. Everything shines through the prism that is The Elected, Blake's songwriting as distinct as it is indebted, as simple as it is refined. Instead of retracing his steps, he's forged new ground. More than a mere dalliance, this former side project now begs the attention reserved for one's main focus. As the ghosts of Rilo Kiley fade into the ether, *Bury Me in My Rings* presents the man responsible an opportunity to further himself from the past, and to continue to develop his artistic identity.

So maybe the break did him good. Maybe we wouldn't have been treated to such a wonderful illustration of a reluctant songwriter's talents. A year ago, he might of laughed, or grimaced, at the thought of another record to promote, countless more hours on the road. But here we are, and here he is, with another achievement for all of us to enjoy.

I suppose Hollywood can wait.

Bury Me In My Rings will be made available everywhere on May 17th via Vagrant Records.