

The New Pornographers

Continue as a Guest



Over the past 20 years, **The New Pornographers** have proven themselves one of the most excellent bands in indie rock. They’ve constantly offered new sonic surprises with every album, and *Continue as a Guest* is their greatest leap to date. The group’s ninth album and first for Merge establishes them alongside modern luminaries like Yo La Tengo and Superchunk when it comes to their ability to evolve while still retaining what made them so special in the first place. A dazzling and intriguing collection of songs that are truly built to

last, *Continue as a Guest* finds bandleader A.C. Newman and his compatriots Neko Case, Kathryn Calder, John Collins, Todd Fancey, and Joe Seiders exploring fresh territory and shattering the barriers of their collective comfort zone.

Newman began work on *Continue as a Guest* at his Woodstock, NY, home over the course of a year, after the band had just finished touring behind 2019’s *In the Morse Code of Brake Lights*. “I found myself for the first time thinking that it was really time for me to learn how to become a home-recording guy—and I had all the

time in the world to do it as well,” he recalls. “There was a lot of woodshedding. It was helpful to learn more about engineering and arranging. I still feel like a real novice at it, but I’m much better than I used to be.”

Themes of isolation and collapse bleed into this album’s lyrical framework, as Newman tackles the ambivalence of day-to-day life during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the endless pitfalls of living online. But Newman says that *Continue as a Guest*’s title track also addresses the continually rolling concerns that come with

being in a band for so long. “The idea of continuing as a guest felt very apropos to the times,” he explains. “Feeling out of place in culture, in society, being in a band that has been around for so long—not feeling like a part of any zeitgeist, but happy to be separate and living your simple life, your long fade-out. Living in a secluded place in an isolated time, it felt like a positive form of acceptance: find your own little nowhere, find some space to fall apart, continue as a guest.”

As Newman continued to “peel away” at the songs during the writing and recording process, he also discovered new vocal approaches within his own talent. “I was way more concerned with vocals than I ever was before,” he states. “I’d change melodies all the time if it didn’t feel smooth coming out of my mouth. I was less concerned with what I was singing and more with *how* I was singing.” Indeed, there are new and rich tones to Newman’s voice throughout *Continue as a Guest*, from his dusky lower register over the Saint Etienne—recalling sparkle of the title track and the glam stomper “Angelcover” to the slippery slide he embraces over the glimmering synths of “Firework in the Falling Snow” and the bold tones he embraces on the soaring “Bottle Episodes.”

Another noticeable sonic change comes courtesy of saxophonist Zach Djanikian, whose tenor and bass tones luxuriate all over *Continue as a Guest*’s alluring

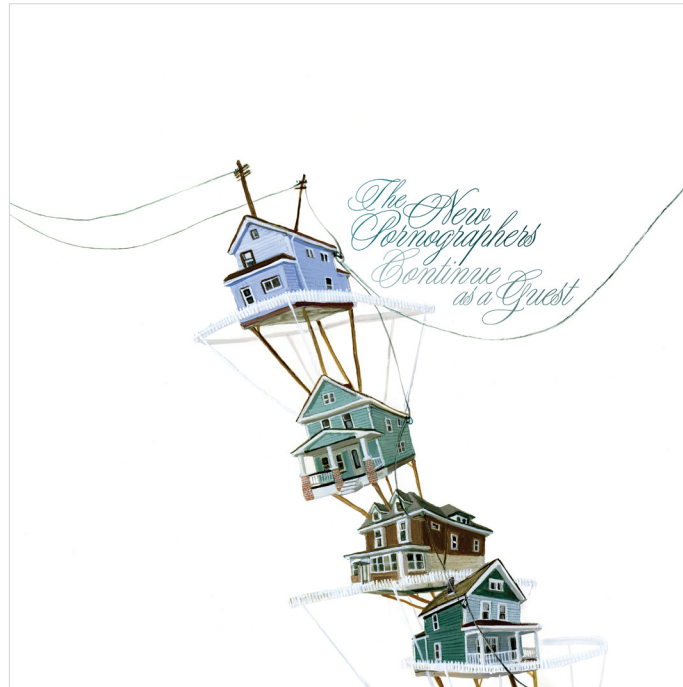
chassis, especially on the menacing build of “Pontius Pilate’s Home Movies.” “Every record has a lot of something that was just around,” Newman states while discussing the new textures provided by Djanikian. “*Electric Version* had a lot of pump organ, and because I loved having Zach as a sounding board while working on this

been messing with things I never finished,” Newman says. “I really liked Dan’s chorus, and for a while I was just trying to write something that I felt like belonged with it.”

Then there’s “Firework in the Falling Snow,” a pen pal-esque collaboration with Sadie Dupuis of indie rock greats Speedy Ortiz and Sad13. “I was feeling like I wanted some help, so I sent it to Sadie and she sent me back this complete song that had these great lyrics,” Newman says while talking about how the two teamed up. “She included the line ‘A firework in the falling snow,’ and I was like, ‘Yeah, that’s great.’ Sometimes you need that one thing to center the song, and even though I only used a few lines of hers in the end, I couldn’t have finished it without her.”

Even as Newman embraces a collaborative spirit more than ever, *Continue as a Guest* is also a testament to his ability to discover new artistic sides of himself. “I started out as a songwriter more than as a singer, but

at some point, you have to sing your own songs,” he says with a chuckle. “For a long time, I felt like the idea of changing a song because I couldn’t hit a note wasn’t okay—I could just get someone else to sing it. But I’m learning now that my songs can actually be a lot more malleable than I thought.” And it’s in that spirit that *Continue as a Guest* sounds like a thrilling path forward for The New Pornographers, with songs that generate a contagious feeling of excitement for the future as well.



album artwork

album by myself, there’s a lot of saxophone on this one.”

Along with Newman’s usual cast of collaborators, several songwriters contribute to *Continue as a Guest* in curious ways. The bursting opener and first single “Really Really Light” is a co-write with Dan Bejar (Destroyer, The New Pornographers), effectively refashioning a cutting-room-floor track from the band’s fantastic 2014 album *Brill Bruisers*. “Part of my process throughout the years has

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT
JOE COHEN, KRISTA WILLIAMS OR CARLA SACKS 212.741.1000 AT SACKS & CO.,
JOE.COHEN@SACKSCO.COM, KRISTA@SACKSCO.COM OR CARLA@SACKSCO.COM.**