**Biography - Heart of Gold**

Peppering subtle philosophical insights, midnight ponderings, and fond memories alongside layers of dreamy synths and smooth saxophone, Heart of Gold’s Michael McGough is bringing a refreshing personal spin to pop music.

As many a listener can attest, it’s no secret that the genre in which the Manchester-based outfit resides has always embraced tales of love and heartbreak. Yet, while these themes are indeed tastefully sprinkled throughout McGough’s latest work, his debut record is less about finding “the one,” and more about finding oneself in the swirling ups and downs of life’s winding roads.

It may seem odd at first to call this a coming-of-age story for an artist who’s seen outpourings of success both on his own as well as with popular post-hardcore group, Being As An Ocean. However, his new album *Beautiful Dangerous* is a rebirth of sorts for the singer-songwriter, both sonically and lyrically.

“My whole career as a musician has been a combination of sometimes getting to sing my own songs and lyrics, and at other times, telling someone else’s story,” McGough explains. “This was a feeling of accomplishment because I finally get to share my story, do it with conviction, and be proud of it. I’m elated that I’m able to be super expressive and very open and honest with the music, the lyrics, and what I hope it portrays to people.”

Serving as an aural time capsule for stories new and old, the album is a testament to McGough’s lived experiences, drawing inspiration from a set of notebooks spanning the past ten years, and memories that date back even further to his childhood in a small English village. Common emotional experiences and feelings were grouped together, and riffling through the pages and entries, lyrics were born.

But time was not the only plane Heart of Gold traversed in the creative process. Traveling to tap the talents of friend, producer, and studio owner, Phil Gornell, McGough routinely left his San Diego home around sunrise and made the five-to-six-hour drive to a small studio not too far from Burbank, Los Angeles. After several weeks, and with vocals and guitar completed, he and the music made their way back to Gronell’s iconic Steel City Studios in Sheffield. It was here in England that drums and percussion were tracked, engineered, and sent to Gornell in LA before circling back to Manchester for mastering. Distance was even bridged virtually as the team collaborated with Black Peaks’ Will Gardner over Zoom to add an extra dash of glittering artistry and the bright brassy flair of a saxophone solo or two. In McGough’s words, “the record has done the rounds and made a really good little trip around the world,” so it follows that the sound is a direct representation of this journey.

Listeners can appreciate the range exemplified in the soft rainy day keyboard notes in ‘Hometime,’ the lively clap-along choruses and layered chord progressions at the close of ‘Bad Habit,’ and the swing-inspired beat of ‘Headache’ that effectively transforms any room into a dancefloor. For whether it be the literal crunching of snow underfoot or “sparkling Miami Vice-like guitar tones,” the record bursts with transportive elements, words, and the feelings they evoke.

And interestingly, if one of these images is a relaxing summery drive, the creative team has declared success.

“I spend so much of my time driving,” McGough reveals. “Even if it’s just to get groceries or get coffee or actually going somewhere and doing something. I’m alone with no music, just my thoughts. I’m like, ok, I’ve done some cool things, I’ve seen some cool things, some not some cool things, but everything led me to where I am right now. To be able to talk about it and write about it is exciting and fun…I remember one day in the studio we were really thrilled about this song we had written. I think it was ‘Leave Just Yet.’ Before we had even thought about the vocals, we were playing what we had done. The guitars and the drums and everything. On a computer we opened up a video of a car - like one of those old 80’s or 90’s arcade games where the car is just driving and there are palm trees and buildings - and we were listening to the music and just watching this screensaver on the TV. So, if it looks like it goes well together, then it’s a good song.”

The perfect metaphor for a fundamental step in the record’s creation, McGough’s constant commute and the resulting miles of worldly reflection has infused itself deep into the very bones of *Beautiful Dangerous*. With the charm of an inspired coastal drive, the album whisks listeners away to a nostalgic sunset trip down memory lane, immersed in vibrant melodies as soft neon lights glow in the rear view. An exploration of self, nestled within the verses and foot-tapping beats of pop music. Heart of Gold in a nutshell.

Distilled to its most elemental form, McGough instructs that when it comes to the journey of life, one remembers just two words:

“The title says it all. Beautiful Dangerous. That is how everything could be determined. It’s like life and love. Life is beautiful, life is very dangerous. Love is beautiful, love is dangerous. Learning, growing, everything. It’s either both or one or the other. It’s fun, it’s exciting, it’s heartbreaking, it’s amazing, it’s awful. One bounces off the other.

I think it’s important to remain hopeful and not forget that this applies to everything and everybody. It will get better. It will get worse. But that doesn’t necessarily mean it will stay that way. Life will always have its way of doing what it wants and you can make the most of it. Let it be beautiful. And let it be dangerous. It’s more fun that way.”