

'Our Unworn Limbs' paints a picture in sound



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By Nate Smelle

Throughout 2019 Uncle Woe's Rain Fice spent the lion's share of his time crafting and recording the songs which would eventually become the band's debut album, 'Our Unworn Limbs'. Recorded at his home-based studio in L'Amable, the album was first released online last December. Having previously recorded 21 albums while working with other bands, Fice said he headed into this project with low expectations; intending only to 'make the album he wanted to make.' Almost immediately after 'Our Unworn Limbs' was released, to his surprise, the album started generating an overwhelmingly positive response from fans and critics around the world. 'I really have no choice but to make music,' Fice said. 'I am not in it for the glory; it's a labour of love. I spent last year putting this album together because that's what I do.' With this album I was making the album I always wanted to make, and it worked. I don't know if it is just the right combination of the name of the project being catchy and the artwork is really striking. I don't know exactly what it is that has managed to get this one to break through. After being invited to perform his music at venues throughout Canada and as far away as Hamburg, Germany, Fice started recruiting band-mates to join him on stage as Uncle Woe. With gigs lined up throughout April and May, Uncle Woe began practicing for the shows in early January. However, soon after they started practicing together as a band, he said COVID-19 put its foot down in Ontario and Uncle Woe's plans to share their music and promote the album changed. Despite the praise 'Our Unworn Limbs' has been receiving since its release online, restrictions in place to prevent the spread of the virus have also prevented the band from performing their music live on stage. Because of the absence of being able to perform live at such a critical time after the album's release, he said the band's potential to share their music with a larger audience has become very limited. 'This is the point where you need a good live show,' said Fice. 'You need to be a good, fully functioning, competent band to go out and play places and make an impression, because anybody who can play half an instrument can record an album now and put it out. It's a really tough business especially if you aren't out gigging.' While it is true that the internet has made it possible to record and share music with others easier, Fice said it has also made succeeding in the music industry more difficult in a lot of ways. Reminiscing about how in the '90s he would record and share his music using a cheap drum machine and a four-track cassette recorder, Fice said that type of intimate experience of hearing original music has for the most part been lost. 'You would take it somewhere and you would play it for somebody, and it was a kind of a mind-blowing for some people because they were listening to music from someone they know. Then MySpace and everything took off and all of a sudden talented musicians were a dime a dozen. It makes it so you can get your music out there, literally to the whole world, but so can everybody else and you just get swallowed up.' One way Uncle Woe has been able to connect with a bigger audience is through releasing 'Our Unworn Limbs' on vinyl. Unlike when people flip from one song to the next when listening to music online, Fice said when someone listens to vinyl they often get a more complete experience because they tend to listen to an entire album side or the whole album. Recalling how his love of vinyl started early on in life, he said 'I grew up around vinyl and my dad started letting me use the turntable around eight or

nine-years-old. It had pretty much disappeared by the '90s when I was a teenager really getting into music. Having a disposable income as you do when you are younger it was all about CDs and cassettes. You could find really big bands like Tool and Nine Inch Nails on vinyl but there was no underground music on vinyl. It was pretty much dead. When vinyl started making a comeback over the last decade I started following all these independent record companies that have beautiful vinyl it totally re-ignited my passion for vinyl. When it comes to making music, for Fice there is no formula. When making music, he said a song can begin with the lyrics, the music, or even a drum beat stuck in his head. Throughout his career in music, Fice has drawn inspiration from his own observations and life experiences. On many occasions, he said this inspiration has arisen from the ashes of personal tragedy. For example, Fice said much of his early music came from dealing with the death of his sister at a very young age, and losing his brother to an overdose years later. 'My brother and I were really close, and that loss, the hole that he left was immense for me. And my sister had died when I was a kid just going into kindergarten, so there was always a fear,' he explained. 'As soon as I found out my Mum was pregnant when she had my brother, I said to my parents 'I gave them a really hard time about having another baby ' 'I didn't want him, I wasn't going to like him and you can't make me.' I was just afraid he was going to die because that happened? That messed me up, and then when my [brother] died when I was 23 it was a really big thing.' Devastated by the loss of his siblings, Fice turned to music. While listening to bands such as Sigur Rós and Mogwai at the time he discovered inspiration to become more 'musically expressive' in a way that allowed him to 'paint a picture with sound.' Describing how his music evolved over the years, Fice said the sound of 'Our Unworn Wings,' differs from his earlier music because it deals with human issues on a deeper, more universal level. Acknowledging that the subject matter of the lyrics had also changed, he said 'It's not overtly political but it is social. It is about human nature and doing wrong to people you love.' Fice said that although the bulk of the songs on 'Our Unworn Limbs' are 'sprawling and meandering in their own right,' as a whole album this record is much more 'linear and concise' than his previous releases. In the past, he said he has dabbled in and hinted at this music' in his other works but never reignited it in. Explaining further how his musical evolution played out on the album Fice said 'There are moments as heavy as anything you'll find on this album interspersed throughout a lot of my earlier albums, but I think out of my body of work, this is the album with the boldest personality. I set out with a clear vision of where I wanted to see this project go, and felt no hesitation in sifting through and pushing aside anything that wasn't right on target. I wanted this album to be a listening experience that finds its footing early on, and maintains and further develops and explores that atmosphere. The songs are heavy and dense, and bold enough to make an impression right away, but I think are also nuanced enough to further unfurl after a few listens.' To listen to Uncle Woe's music, and/or purchase a copy of 'Our Unknown Limbs' visit the band online at: www.unclewoe.bandcamp.com ; and on their Facebook page.