

OLEANDER

Thomas Flowers - vocal
Doug Eldridge - bass
Ric Ivanisevich - guitar
Steve Brown - drums
Rich Mouser - guitar

Oleander bassist Doug Eldridge offered a simple but profound statement about his band's new album *Something Beautiful*, their first effort since embarking on a self-imposed hiatus (but not a break up) that began somewhere around 2005. "We did this for ourselves and to have fun, since we love it," Eldridge said. "If this [record] is huge, great. If not, we had fun and we loved doing it. What happens now is out of our hands."

That's a refreshing and honest attitude to have, and it's also indicative of the organic nature of the album, all factors that should help *Something Beautiful* find its audience.

Oleander came to prominence in the late 1990s and early '00s, releasing *February Son* (1999) and *Unwind* (2001) before moving over to Sanctuary for *Joyride* (2003). Hailing from Sacramento, the band built up a healthy following of fans and garnered radio support, thanks to their melodic, post-grunge sound. But the music extended beyond hybrids and music critic jargon and terminology. It had a pulse and a heartbeat, with blood surging through its riffy veins. But despite the success, the grind of touring and promotion took its toll, as it often inevitably does, and the band felt drained. Things weren't fun anymore around 2003 and the boys decided it was time to take a step back, something they were well within their rights to do.

Eldridge continues, "We never broke up. We said, 'Let's sit back for a while and enjoy life.' We did shows through 2005." He admitted the band always felt it would do *something* again. Even after the last show in Sacto in 2005, everyone still talked and stayed in touch. Eldridge remembers, "Around 2009 and 2010, [singer] Tom [Flowers] had been in another band, doing his thing. It had been a long time, but we thought, 'Let's play some music. Let's see if it's fun again.'"

"It took me getting away and doing something else," Flowers says about what reignited the Oleander passion for him. "Doing another project that wasn't mine was not the same experience as doing music with my friends. It took *that* for me to miss what we had and still have."

Eldridge further reasoned, "You have to enjoy what you are doing."

He's right. If bands aren't "feeling it," fans will notice and that disconnect could affect the listener's relationship with the tunes. Thankfully, when the Oleander crew reconvened, at Flowers' suggestion, the spark and the magic were still there. "We got back together, wrote music, went in the studio to see if we had gas left in the tank."

Turns out the tank was still full of high-octane fluid! Despite half the band living in Sacto and the other half residing in So Cal, the members recorded four tracks and, perhaps equally as important, they enjoyed being around each other and playing music again. They decided to keep it going, sans lofty goals or record label sanctions. The band was free to do whatever it wished, how it wished and when it wished. The members thought about what was best for the whole. That organic, pressure-free approach resulted in the solid songs that make up *Something Beautiful*. Additionally, the fact that the band employs a democratic process when writing, where every member contributes, from the lyrics to the music, make *Something Beautiful* an absolute collaboration. It may sound cliché, but Oleander picked up right where they left off.

"The music is an extension of a band from where we were when we stopped writing," Flowers revealed, admitting that the process was quick but the band still afforded itself time to polish things off. "That was a cool aspect of getting back in the room and getting juices flowing again. We picked up where we left off. It was effortless for us to pull these songs together. The time [we took] was in recording and giving it attention."

Speaking of time, the musical world changed while Oleander was "sleeping," so to speak. Twitter and TMZ were not part of the cultural landscape in the early part of their career. Hell, MySpace came and went during that time. Radio rotations and word-of-mouth touring are no longer the driver for rock bands. While Flowers joked that he felt "like I am coming out of a drug-induced coma to this new century," the band is moving full speed, excited to connect with fans by any digital means afforded them.

But straight up, fans will be treated to a cornucopia of songs, cycling through different tempos and moods.

Eldridge revealed that "Fight" was the product of a struggle between lyrical content and melody lines. "I went to Pasadena to the studio, recorded my bass parts and we were still hyper analyzing what we had, how to approach from melodic and lyrical perspective," he recalled. "On my plane, I sat next to Uriah Faber, who is an MMA fighter. It was appropriate. We started talking about music and I was telling him that we're working on a song and hashing it out." The music conversation developed into a music business chat. They kept in contact and Faber hit the studio and appears on the song.

Flowers expounded upon how Oleander articulate on songs like the title track and "Daylight," both of which he says "are reflective of our lives today, even on a moment-to-moment basis. If fans are interested in knowing what we go through, don't look further than the marriage between the music and the lyrics. We spent a lot of time making sure they balance and complement each other."

The singer also admitted that the band didn't go into this album looking for runaway commercial success, although they'll take it if it comes. It's exactly that attitude that will help fans connect with the music. And judging from the songs that comprise *Something Beautiful*, Oleander may get what they *weren't* looking for. "Anything truly written from the heart has an honest shot of connecting with individuals and that makes success. I am most proud of the fact that I listen to these songs over and over again," Flowers said.

There is a theme and a lyrical connective tissue to *Something Beautiful*. "We are all in the same boat, trying to get to point A to point B, whether we are in traffic or trying to figure out how to pay bills. We're fighting for our lives. That's true for a lot of us and for people," the singer said.

The result is an album that bridges the gap between modern and alternative rock, with Eldridge going so far as to say that the band can't and won't pinpoint influences. "Since our second record and the writing of our third to this point, being our fourth release, I think we have come into our own. If there are influences there, I can't tell you what they are. We get together and write from our hearts," he said.

Flowers further stated, "We're coming back to this crazy industry, presenting a new record and it's so unattractive to us to consider trying to compete with younger guys, better looking guys, harder rocking guys. We're just a group of friends that happen to enjoy making music together and have a platform for releasing it. It's not about the ego."

Oleander have grown up, they've experienced more and are maximizing their potential.

Remember what Eldridge said earlier. "We did this for ourselves and to have fun, since we love it."

With an album like *Something Beautiful*, Oleander should reach its audience, and find a new one!