

Q+A

MATT GOSS

THE ONE-TIME TEEN HEARTTHROB IS ABOUT TO MOVE BACK TO THE UK AND HAS A NEW SOLO ALBUM ON THE WAY. BUT WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH NEW BROS MUSIC? WE FIND OUT...

STEVE O'BRIEN

Matt Goss is a busy man. Not only does the sometime Bros frontman have his fifth solo album ready for release next February, he has another (festive-themed) record in the can, too, and he's planning to move back to the UK after a decade in the United States where he's been one of Vegas' most in-demand performers.

Rest assured, though, Brosettes, this flurry of solo activity doesn't mean that the group he's most famous for is over – far from it. It's just that what any new Bros album will sound like needs some sorting out between Matt and twin brother Luke first.

"I've got to find a happy medium where I can make sure my brother is completely heard," Matt tells us, "but not to the point where he's the main authority, otherwise we'll make a rock record."

We caught up with Matt via Zoom to find out about his current plans and learn more about exactly how healthy his relationship is with Luke after that famously stormy 2018 documentary *After The Screaming Stops*.

Congratulations on the forthcoming solo album, *The Beautiful Unknown*. Was this a record conceived and recorded in lockdown?

It was lockdown written, but the first half of this lockdown I fell completely out of love with music. I had no interest in it. I didn't want to sing, I didn't want to touch my piano or my guitars. I had no idea about how to write a song. And because I was doing four shows a week, I found myself just waiting for those gaps when I didn't have to sing. Then I sat at my piano one night at two o'clock in the morning, and I was just like, "If nothing happens here, I'm going to go back to just calling it a day." Then I sat and wrote this song called *Shipwreck*. I loved the chord progressions. I liked the way the melody was coming out of my throat – it just felt good. So I called Babyface the next day, and he said, "I love it, come to LA and let's record it." So, I did exactly that.

Have you noticed a different reaction to your new material, compared to 2013's *Life You Imagine*?

Across the board, 100% people have said, "It's good to have you back." You know, radio began to love it, we're starting to get

playlisted. And we're beginning to create the right kind of waves. We're going to do 11 videos for this album, because I want this to be a visual record. You can watch it from start to finish.

Was there any thought of this ever being a Bros album?

No, I mean, my brother's really found his groove as a painter right now. He's really loving having complete control of his own destiny. My brother, when he's doing acting, he loves it, but you need a crew, you need a cast, you need a script, you need a director. You need all these moving parts to actually get on set and do what you love to do. Whereas, as a musician, you really can just get it done. And it's the same with painting for my brother – he can let loose and really fall into the paint, he loves it. But we've vowed that we will never break up again. And I think once I'm done with this record, the logical thing would be to do a Bros album. That all depends on us finding a common language creatively.

How do you and Luke get on now? In the documentary, after all the clashes early on, you guys found a sort of peace by the end. Have you maintained that relationship?

Yeah, we play video games at night. That's our connection – when I'm done with my work and when he's done with his work, we'll play video games. We've got a couple that we play – *Battlefield* and *Rainbow Six Siege*. And that's how we connect, when we switch off together. But we will speak three or four times a day. He's my best friend, but we push each other's buttons on a level that's so gargantuan, that when it goes bad, it goes real bad. But we are finding our way, and we've realised that there's no argument that's more important than losing each other.

Have you and Luke talked about a new album? It'd be interesting to know what the Bros sound is like now in 2021/2022.

To be honest with you, I'd like to know, too. So that's where we've got to get to, we've got to figure that out. I want to make sure my brother feels heard, it's very, very important to me. But not at the expense of me being the mute frontman, you know. It was very difficult,

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Matt Goss is relocating to the UK – and releasing his latest studio album in the new year

that constant apology being the frontman. I don't want to live in that universe because it's exhausting. It's subservient, and I'm not that guy.

Were your musical tastes always that disparate or were there records or genres that you agreed on?

I grew up with Cream, Free and Led Zeppelin and all that stuff my brother loves, you know, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, all the way through to Living Colour. I love rock, I love the power of it. But I think even on this record, we've definitely got a musicality that's gonna hit really hard. *Somewhere To Fall* is going to hit really hard live. And musically, the guitars on my record are solid. But I don't want to just write that one genre, I want to blend those genres.

You've recorded a Christmas album, haven't you? Can we expect that this year?

It's not coming out this Christmas, but it's with the legendary John Pizzarelli, arguably one of the greatest modern jazz guitar players in the world. He's an incredible man and we recorded it at Capitol Studios.

So are these going to be old Christmas standards, or are they newly written?

It's sensual. It's called *Christmas After*



Matt in the studio recording *The Beautiful Unknown*

Midnight and it's exactly for that. It's for a nice drink, and a bit of naughtiness. It's a soul jazz record and just so beautiful. It has all the standards, but not in a way that I've ever heard done.

What are you listening to at the moment? You said you fell out of love with music, did that include listening to it as well?

My influences are embedded in me – Stevie Wonder, Donny Hathaway, even Amy Winehouse and The Beatles. But before I started this record, I didn't listen to anything for almost a year, except for commercial radio. If I'm really honest, I didn't know two thirds of the artists, I just knew the songs. I just wanted to saturate my head with contemporary beats, contemporary synth sounds, contemporary arrangements. And it became very apparent just how short the songs were.

And that fed into this album?

I wanted to have 11 great pop songs on there. You can throw a dart at this album, and any one of these songs could be a hit. That's partly because of the way I dive into things. I really had to re-educate my mind, and put my mind in a place. My instinct would be to write quite a dark record, I guess because many of us have been through some challenging places in the last couple of years,

but then I was like, fuck it, I'm gonna just write an uplifting pop record and maybe blend it with some hard-hitting lyrics. You know, intelligent pop music.

You've also started a podcast now, *Conversations With Matt Goss...*

It's in the Top Five of podcasts now. It started because of my love for doing Instagram. I just really like connecting with people that were not fans of mine, and don't know my music. We have really frank conversations, talking about things like political correctness, stuff that I really believe needs to be spoken about – the guilt of happiness, and all these things that we're kind of constricted by, and fearful of, the fear that's within us.

You did one episode earlier this year that was called 'Politically Correct... Gone Too Far'

We talk about how they want to lose the words 'Maternity Ward'. I think if you're going to transition from a man to a woman, the simplest way forward is to probably embrace the female language, and female terminology, rather than catering to the person that's transitioning. The easiest way, the smartest way to me would be to say, "Okay, I'm going to embrace feminine language with pride." Rather than calling it breast milk, they want to call it chest milk. All these things I wouldn't normally talk about.

I was quite nervous, but I said, "Well, maybe you want to embrace the language that's there", because there are also millions upon millions of women, *billions* of women, who have dreamt of going into a maternity ward or breastfeeding their child. I think that minorities must be heard, but not at the expense of the

majority. I am all for whatever somebody wants to be, but sometimes there's a real quick, easy route, and a road through to happiness for that person transitioning. I don't know if you fancy chest milk... I don't – breast milk is far more appealing.

In addition to this new album and your podcast, you're planning on moving back to the UK.

I am. I have such a small family, and not necessarily a supportive one either. I felt quite panic-stricken at times about the lack of my family. And when I'm in the UK, it doesn't matter what bar or restaurant I go to, even if I walk down the street, somebody will come up and say, "Hey, mate!" There's an immediacy, like they recognise you and talk to you as if they've known you for 30 years.

So where are you with it? Have you been house hunting yet?

Well, I'm doing two things. I'm moving to LA so I'll be bi-coastal. I'll be living in LA and London. When I come back to the UK to promote the album, I'll also be looking at houses, too.

What will you most miss about the United States?

I think success is a brilliant word here. You don't have to feel ashamed of it whatsoever. Obviously this country has its faults, and America also needs to learn from the rest of the world, too, but one of the few things we can learn from America is that success is a tremendous word over here. On a material level, if you're driving a nice car, you can guarantee you'll hear three or four times in a day from a guy, "Love your car, man – I'm going to get one of those one day!" It's a real pleasure to want to strive. Let's say you've got a dream about what you want to do. In America, they say, "Do it. Let's go for it. What do you need? I know somebody!" It's a very enlivened culture when it comes to pushing forward, and anything is possible. It's not a cliché, it actually exists in America, it really does. ■



● **The Beautiful Unknown is due for release in February 2022 via Lewisham Records/Explorer!**