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SIGNS of LIFE IN MUSIC, FILM & CULTURE

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FEBRUARY 2009

OUR
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ISSUE
LOVEFEST

FEATURING
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GIRL TALK,
ANI DIFRANCO,
ALEJANDRO
ESCOVEDO,
AMANDA
PALMER AND
NEKO CASE →

PLUS
SINGING
LESSONS
WITH ANTONY
A BIGGIE SMALLS
BIOPIC
& RICHARD MARX
IN CAMBODIA



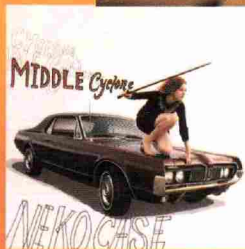
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IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CYCLONE WITH NEKO CASE

BY JOSH JACKSON

PASTE: What was going through your head as you were writing these songs?

NEKO CASE: Well, as I was writing them, I didn't really know what was going through my head. And that's the way it always starts out. But when I got a little ways in, I realized I had a bit of an obsession with tornadoes. And I realized I was writing popular songs, and decided to have some choruses on this record. I also realized that since *Fox Confessor*, I'd said a lot that I don't write love songs—I just don't like to do it. But I ended up writing lots of love songs. If you say you don't want to do something, you're going to contradict yourself later. It always happens. They're still not traditional love songs, but they're love songs nonetheless.



P: Where did the obsession with tornadoes come from?

NC: I really don't know. I had a dream one night about a tornado. It was a really interesting dream, and ever since then I've been thinking about them. I realized that a lot of the songs have tornadoes in them without even realizing that I was doing that.

P: And on "This Tornado Loves You," who is this tornado?

NC: It's quite literally a tornado. It's a literal story about a tornado in love with a person. That's what the dream was about. It wasn't me that the tornado was in love with; it was kind of a kid. It was a strange story, but I was pretty moved by it.

P: It sounds like something that could have been a part of *Fox Confessor*.

NC: Yeah, I'm still very much interested in fairy tales. But I think it's more about writing new fairy tales. These are now fairy tales with little love stories in them, I suppose. They're a little less cautionary and a little more personal.

P: How did you want to approach the desire for poppier songs and choruses in the studio?

NC: I think that a lot of that desire came from just playing with The New Pornographers so much, and making their last couple records. Gang singing is a great effect, and it's a really fun time. I just realized



that it's going to take a lot of singing and a couple of major chords, for a change, rather than just minor chords all the time. [Major chords after minor chords are] like you just poked your head out of the water after holding your breath.

P: You've said in the past that you're a little bit of a control freak. With all these amazing musicians like M. Ward, Sarah Harmer and Lucy Wainwright Roche, plus folks from Calexico, The Sadies and The New Pornographers all coming in, how did you balance that?

NC: Well, I think my control freakness doesn't translate into telling other people what to do so much as just having to be there for every second of everything that happens. "Control freak," as in I don't want to miss any of the mixing, mastering. Some people give that stuff away to other people to do, but I can't do it. The people that I ask to play on it, I don't ever worry about them. Sometimes I tell them what to do, but usually it's just, "more of that!"

P: Do you find that that's a time of special camaraderie, when you're in a studio environment like that?

NC: Yeah, absolutely. I'm not one of those people that can make a record in two weeks. I take a really long time, so I try to make sure that it's a fun time in my life and not just two weeks of boom, boom, boom, boom. We try and go out and have great dinners and go see movies and shows, and walk around and drink tea together.



ONLINE Read the whole conversation at pastemagazine.com/February09