



MUSIC

## THE TALE OF **WALT DISCO**

by [Alex Brzezicka](#)

Walt Disco teach us how to unlearn society, love the beauty of individuality and share their new track 'Hold Yourself As High As Her (Lynks' Remix)'.

Once upon a time, in the land of rolling hills, castles with lochs hiding glamorous creatures and unlimited potential, there was a bunch of wonderful outcasts. Each of them wielded a different superpower: James Potter, the master of ceremonies led with charming vocals; Charlie Lock, breathed life into beats through bass; Jack Martin enchanted the rhythm on drums; Finlay McCarthy slew the mundanity with guitar and keyboards; Lewis Carmichael hypnotized beasts with riffs; and, finally, David Morgan served sassy synth. Meeting in the in-between, they've realised that saving themselves from the absurd societal standards doesn't have to be a solo quest. Signing a magic pact in notes, lyrics and pounding of the hearts, they came together under the new name: Walt Disco.

A few years later, Walt Disco have become an unstoppable hurricane of sexy energy and a beautiful, joyful mess. A one-of-a-kind force of something beyond ecstasy. At their London gig in XOYO, when James sang words, "*Hey boy, you're one of us!*" the crowd melted into one jumping-screaming ball. We shouted at the top of our lungs that despite everyone shoving us into so many cramped shelves, here and now, we're truly free. "Someone described it as a bubble the other day to me. I quite agree with that because it does feel like everyone in there is doing the same thing. It's not like a band performing to the crowd," says Charlie, and Finlay adds: "No matter how big the shows get, we don't really want that separation between artist and audience".





Before the London show of their debut album on the *Unlearning* tour, the Glasgow-based Walt Disco graced our HQ so we could take a closer look at their humble phenomenon. It's a relief when among your heroes, you feel your own superpowers growing stronger: "You're one of us. It's a band for everybody. We're all very different people within the band so it's a band for everyone. We're not just one type of band, one type of audience. When we play live, it's an invitation against that. Join us in having fun. It's a two-way street. I will have fun, whether there are two or 200 people there. That's not going to change. It's just up to you whether you want to join," Jack proudly states.

Dissecting the gender-normative aesthetics, simply enjoying experimenting with fashion and stealing stares with their fabulously flamboyant style, Walt Disco got quickly hailed as a queer band. It's important to represent the community but also to look deeper than the often tokenistic surface of sexuality/gender identity. "When we're in the studio, we're not thinking queer. We're just thinking the way we think and that, in some ways, is queer, but in most of the ways it's just creating," James says, and Finlay adds: "Also, we're not a queer band. Not every single one of us is. We are a band with queer members that champions queer people and attitudes and want to change people's perspectives on that". Here hides the key to seeing humans behind any masks, either deliberately put or forced on. "The beauty is that everyone gets to express themselves in the way they want to. We don't all need to be this one uniform thing," Jack elaborates, "It's freedom and the beauty of individuality. A group of individuals can make a wonderful group. A community. Even if they are different".



Nobody serves empowerment the way Walt Disco does. They are gloriously contemporary: wunderkinder of the New Romantics, pop-esque Bowie and, what's most important, progress. "We like those things," Finlay says. "But we're not from the 80s. Post-punk is this new word for indie bands nowadays. Then, glam rock, I think they're referring to a guitar tone. [...] It's just pop. It's kind of the same as trying to describe Björk's music. Every song is a different genre," James sums up.

When their debut album, *Unlearning*, came out, they were already three shows into the tour. "We've been getting to watch people learn the words and the new songs throughout the tour which was very heart-warming," Finlay says.

"Two days ago, I was got to conduct people during 'Be An Actor,'" James adds, and Charlie smiles, "It was like a Beyonce moment. Pass the mic over to them". The Walt Disco experience is as exhilarating as any Queen B's show. "I'm just trying to copy Kayus from Young Fathers. The way he dances is crazy," James laughs. It's far from a copycat knock-off though. Walt Disco's dynamic theatrics are always top-notch breath-taking, tailored to their eclectic repertoire.



*Unlearning* is a powerfully striking title. They dare to stop mid-step, halfway through the sentence and tell us to turn away. We weren't paving the path but following in someone else's footsteps. It's about time to let go and as painful as it is, to announce capitulation. No point fighting someone else's wars unequipped. The further we go, the more difficult is to know what parts of us are real and which ones we inherited either from close surroundings or as a collective subconscious. In a rock opera manner, the album tells a beautifully cruel and momentarily absurd tale of breaking the illusion of a perfect life, love or identity. It's a guidebook on how to spark a match to set any constructs on fire.

"I've tried to change in the aspects of the British attitude to awkward subjects that my family taught me. Not as if they treated me badly or anything, it's just how they were brought up. Talking about things, or your feelings, was a slow process. My parents still struggle with it. I felt like that was hindering me quite a lot. That was a big, big part of that," James shares. "Like 'Selfish Lover'. The song is about bad sex. I suppose we had to unlearn a typical way of writing and recording music during the situation. There were a lot of habits of songwriting that we had to break and methods of recording," Finlay adds. *Unlearning* laughs at genres, flirting with anything that's exciting, from elusive techno, and indie riffs to the ethereal extravaganza.

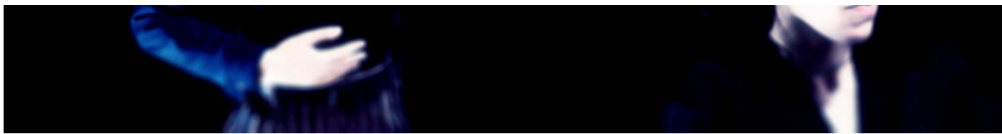




As the album progresses, it feels like the cocoon of constructs is more and more cracked by the raw blades of vulnerability and pure joy. The creature inside is set to fly. "I think I can find it every day a wee bit easier," James says on the art of navigating through the shadows, "It's easier in song than in life. I find it easier. It was often through songs, the first moment in understanding subjects like yourself so that's my diary, my journaling, my therapy. [...] Once it's out there, it feels less like your weight".

Walt Disco offer a shoulder to cry on, always followed by a gigantic smile and a silly joke. The combo of serious and hilarious works wonders when faced with cold-hearted exteriors. 'Be An Actor', with a video set in an extraordinary dollhouse-like set with the band on their most dramatic, is a perfect example of the fusion. "The song was about the lockdown Instagram romance and someone who's also non-binary. The first line ['Was I born to land in between/Or could it be the way I stand] is just about landing in between gender, but the second line is kind of just a joke, about how queer people stand, like rest on your hip. I was just amusing myself," James shyly smiles.





"When you find that those topics with a bit of humour, it makes it easier to be used to deal with them and maybe even to the listener," they add. Each of Walt Disco's tours has its running jokes. This time they're a bit timid to reveal them. "It's really childish. We're really in the toilet humour," Jack says, and adds, "There are times that I forget how to speak to anyone else. I'll say something, I'm just like 'oh shit'". When spending together all the time, you'll always subconsciously develop a family-like secret language. Though, it's not as exclusive as it sounds. Walt Disco flushed pretentiousness down the toilet.

In 'How Cool Are You?' while ice-skating showing off preppy alien-glam in the video, Walt Disco decides to take the piss on the concept of cool. "Cool is being yourself. We all use this as a means of self-expression. We don't all want to look exactly the same onstage. The day-to-day life. It's just a way to be as confident as we can," says Finlay. "Sometimes people feel like being cool is something that they have to aspire, to achieve something that they aren't, but you know, everyone is cool if they are just themselves. You don't want to lose a part of yourself by trying to be something else," Jack adds.



"The traditional way of the view of cool, it doesn't involve laughing. The picture of cool is very toxic because laughing is very important," James says. Walt Disco will kill with kindness any stuck-up, poker-faced followers of the cult of cool. "We made a breakthrough on stage. We were like, 'let's just look like we're having a lot of fun'. I don't want to pretend like I'm not having lots of fun when I am. Seems a bit silly," Finlay admits. It breaks the ice with the audience so anyone can convert into a kicking-legs-up and giggling mass of euphoria. "There's nothing that brings me more pleasure than finding someone in the crowd who looks really stone. Just giving them a big wave and a big smile."

Jack shares.

"Someone actually said to us that we saved their life the other day. I was in a weird mood for a whole day afterwards. It's the strangest thing that ever happened," James recalls, "When you're writing the song, and when you performing it, I can never let my head or ego go there, that the song is gonna mean much to somebody or help someone". Finlay adds: "It's important that we write songs that mean a lot to ourselves". The expression of personal feelings always comes as a priority but the band agrees that it's beyond special if anyone relates. Walt Disco understands. For James St. Vincent and Anna Calvi are figures like this. Finlay names The Blue Nile. Though Walt Disco's spells can be even more compelling than that. "Two people fell in love to 'Be An Actor'. They've been friends forever. Then during that song, they just looked at each other and just started kissing. They were like, Okay, we're together now!" Charlie shares.



Love they're surrounded by helps with being in the pressure public eye. Not many people see 40 photos and videos of themselves a day. The mind can go straight to weird places. "The album was about dealing or finding healthy ways to deal with that moment and knowing how to remove yourself from that," James says. The spiritual band-aid comes in handy when facing any unpleasant reactions. For a band stomping on the clouds of inclusivity, it is unlike them to send thunder haters' way. "Being in a band if you're polarising people, you're probably doing something right," Lewis comments on the by-product of their outstanding presence. As flashy, and simply themselves, as they are, they're an easily visible target to anyone looking to pin the outdated label of 'the other' on them. "We're not trying to push anybody in any which way. It's fun to just be like, 'we exist and we're here and we're having joy in our lives and it doesn't affect you'. We're not trying to be polarising," Jack says, "We are trying to show that we can be ourselves and be happy and you can carry on as you are".

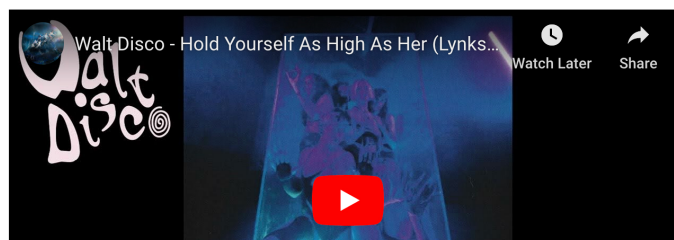
*Unlearning* is a soulful quest for accepting one's identity and a daring challenge to look so-called perfection in the eyes. Layer by layer of fancy velvet fabric, mesmerising make-up and confusion, Walt Disco denounce it. In the closing track, 'If I Had A Perfect Life' they repeatedly chant, "I Don't Want It". The imperfections are holy. Tearing the cage apart is beautiful but as an act of violence and growth, it can be painful.



"Beauty is one of those things where everyone creates their own standard for it. Everyone has their own standard for feeling beautiful in themselves. It's something that's a very important thing to achieve. For me, especially. In the album, there are moments of celebration. Feeling like, 'Yes, this is me. This is beautiful' and it's great, and also the moments where it's like, 'I need to hide away and I don't want to be seen for a while,'" Jack says. Even in the sombre moments, there are still shimmers of hope. James continues: "I definitely felt like most of the time writing it. I didn't want anyone to see me sort of thing. But coming out of it, I want people to see it so I guess that that was the point of it. [...] I really like the dark moments on the album as well".

Walt Disco shows us that we can be our own brave knight in the glittery armour. A quick-witted hero. Though even super-humans might need a little bit of boost on their quest when paper-mache dragons upset us. If your inner queen needs a cheer up, Walt Disco will be there to deliver it all, from seriously important matters to the silly stuff. Why? They're one of us. Once upon a time, they also needed a band like Walt Disco. Today, it's our time to go out, hop on the podium, swirl on the pole, and dance as if nobody's watching. We've never felt more seen.

*Press play on Walt Disco's 'Hold Yourself As High As Her (Lynks' Remix)' below now...*





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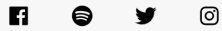
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