



THE TOI

WATER INTO WINE

RELEASE DATE: 2ND MARCH 2015

LABEL: SUSHI ROLL
CAT # - SRTT2013001

GLASWEGIAN ROCKERS THE TOI TO RELEASE “TOTALLY UNFASHIONABLE” DEBUT ALBUM

“You can have all these hipsters from the art schools sitting there sneering at your cowboy boots and your white leather jacket and your rosary beads, but two verses in they already know the words to the chorus...” - Pol Healy, The Toi.

If it's time for the hipster backlash, then Glasgow's new melodic hard-rock sensations The Toi are the band to lead it. Formed three years ago, the live favourites have a storming new single to follow their “Record of the Week” debut, their first album, produced by Oasis engineer Nick Brine and due for release on 2nd March 2015 on the Sushi Roll label, and a big-fan collaborator in The Darkness guitarist and producer Dan Hawkins.

The Toi are three school friends, who grew up ten minutes apart in working-class Glasgow, with a stack of infectious melodies inspired by some unusual influences. As Paul Healy (lead vocals and guitar) explains: “We all sat in our dads' and mums' cars listening to cassettes of Abba, the Bee Gees, Billy Joel, the Beatles – I'm named after a Beatle – and the Eagles”. And for Healy, the main songwriter, there's a storytelling tradition too, that comes from Scottish and Irish folk.

Healy, bassist Andy Carr, and drummer Stevie McLay had played in other bands (“watching other people fuck up”) before Healy told them they should get it together. “I wanted to be an entertainer AND a guitar player. I didn't want to be guitarist in a four-piece where the lead singer gets an acoustic out for three songs.”

So The Toi were born, in 2011. Their name comes from an old Glasgow word for a gang, and emphasises how close-knit they are. They rehearsed in a garage with no heating and no PA – wearing fingerless gloves for warmth, putting old duvets over the cymbals, and toilet roll in their ears. But, occasionally, they could afford to rehearse at Glasgow music legend Duncan Cameron's Riverside Studios. He took a shine to the band and put them in touch with Nick Brine, who ran Dan Hawkins's studio. Both Dan and Nick loved what they heard and The Toi recorded three tracks there.

“We got on like a house on fire – we share these absurd Eighties influences, but I think my cooking helped too”. (To help finance the band, Healy had worked in a commercial kitchen: “we're not like most bands that just eat Pot Noodles”).

The collaboration worked: debut single “Get On It” was Single of the Week in The Sun at the end of 2013, a radio hit, and rode high in the iTunes chart.

Meanwhile, they honed an awesome live show. As Paul Healy says: “We tend to blow people away. We've really worked hard at it. We're high-energy. We improvise, so not everything is always the same because we feed off one another and we engage with the crowd – it's totally unfashionable but people love it. I'm not interested in being or sounding like Coldplay or Paolo Nutini or any of those cats. We entertain people.”

Healy writes some of the songs himself, but most are a collaboration: “Andy writes too and Stevie is particularly great with the arrangements, and when we take it to the studio we all work on it.” The results are deceptively simple: ““Get on It”, for instance, the first single – people hear the chorus at the beginning and think it's a Bon Jovi song, like ‘You Give Love a Bad Name’, but the verses are like Michael Jackson – you could sing it in R&B, it's almost a rap, very rhythmical.”

And album title track “Water in to Wine” (it nearly got away before Dan Hawkins insisted it was the best thing they had) has a very dark core, about, as Healy puts it, a priest he knew who was into “ephebophilia [sexual preference for the pubescent and adolescent] and mind control”. It also became the title track because, “it references the first miracle, the wedding in Cana. We thought let's go for a bit of symbolism and pretend that we're intelligent.”

New single “Come Alive” is more straightforward: “It's a tune about feeling a profound attraction for someone and you want to express it in the most carnal way. Me and Andy wrote that eating curry in his mum's old flat that was above an off-licence, ice cream shop, and the worst curry-house in Glasgow”.

The Toi are never far from the background that both drives them and informs their music: “Our parents struggled. Didn't have anything, still don't have anything. We were well loved, but we never had good shoes, or that kind of thing, we are working class. It has given us a hunger and a drive to succeed.”

The Toi have the kind of drive – and the kind of talent – that the hipster crowd might shave their beards off to try to emulate.

[@The_Toi](https://www.facebook.com/TheToiOfficial)

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WATER INTO WINE – A TRACK-BY-TRACK, BY POL HEALY

‘Get On It’ – “A song about the archetypal ‘bad girl’...the one that's out with her boyfriend but is making eyes at every other guy in the place. You think to yourself that you could handle her but then think that, actually, nah, she's bad news and getting involved will ruin your peace!”

‘Come Alive’- “It's a tune about feeling a profound attraction for someone and you'd like to express it in the most carnal way. Me and our bassist Andy wrote this song while eating curry in his mum's old flat, which was above an off-license, ice cream shop and Tandoori Knights, the worst curry house in Glasgow. Said room was fumigated.”

‘I'm Still Crying’ – “We were in Germany playing some small acoustic shows and were on our way to a party we'd been invited to after a gig. Andy was suffering from a broken heart at the time and came up with the title which, in a Jägermeister fuelled haze, I started singing to him. When we eventually woke up the next day Andy asked if I remembered the chorus, which fortunately I did. We then wrote the verses. The pre-chorus was from an old song I wrote and it just fitted perfectly.”

‘Til The Morning Comes’ – “I was walking to Andy's place on a Sunday night when, in true Glasgow style, the heavens opened. I started to walk a bit quicker and came up with this chorus that mirrored the pace I was walking at. By the time I got to Andy's I had the bulk of the song written in my head, and when we got together we put *into the 70's rock processor* and it turned out well. I think this is why Dan Hawkins really liked the tune. The song is about a couple of friends who, shall we say, had trouble parting after breaking-up.”

‘The One’ – “I was a big fan of "Every Breath You Take" by The Police and loved that it comes across as a love song even when it's not. So I wanted the lyrics to be like a psycho-love song, a stalker who's voyeurism has gone well-past unhealthy. I think the outro is probably the best bit of jamming we managed to track. It's got so much feel, and the bass and drums are just killer!”

‘Staring At The Sun’ – “Originally this was an old song called "Save Me", which producer Nick Brine and Dan liked but felt could be better. They suggested we change the lyrics and tempo. So, the night before tracking it we were in our hotel room working it out. Andy must take great credit for persisting with it because me and Dog (Steve) were ready to jump out the window.”

‘I Think About You’ – “This is one of the earliest songs Andy and I wrote together. It's just a straightforward sing-along song; big chorus, big solo and big drum sound. Lyrically, it's about seasonal affective disorder which, being Glaswegian, kicks in around the second week of August. So, it's a love song written about summer in the depths of a Scottish winter.”

‘Water Into Wine’- “The album's title track nearly never made it onto the album at all! I had never sung it to the guys before, so they were somewhat in the dark as to how it was going to sound. When it came to pre-production Nick and Dan were convinced that a song was missing. The only thing we'd not demoed was Water Into Wine. When they heard it they turned and looked at each another and said, "That's the best bloody song you've done all day! Are you mental?!"

The song is about a person who is a wolf in sheep's clothing. The world is full of them; religious orders, politics, law enforcement, work places...even some girls in nice dresses! I'm a sucker for biblical references and it became the title track as it's our first record and it's the first of the miracles in the new testament - and it's a bloody miracle us three have come this far!”

‘Cold In The Night’ – “Originally a song called Stay With Me Tonight, this was the first song me and Andy wrote together. Dan and Nick loved it but said we needed a stronger chorus, so I started humming the melody of a lesser known "Ave Maria" which Dan and Nick loved. Andy came up with the lyrics and Dog arranged some killer drums. The choruses ate a big homage to QUEEN, hence the ridiculous harmonies.”

‘Down By The River’- “Another writing session at Chez Healy and, as per usual, all we had done was drink tea. It was nearly home time and Andy turns to me, as he regularly does, and says, "Healy, gimme a song!?!?" I just started singing...it was all there. We worked on the lyrics, which I think are very Springsteen-esque; Boy meets girl, falls in lust, have a child, work isn't easy to come by, they grow apart but something makes them stick together. It's a song that people love when we do it live...it's got a lot of sentiment in it. I guess we're lucky that people connect to it. A great story and as always there's that optimism attached to it, which is what we as a band are all about.”