

## THE WONDER YEARS – THE HUM GOES ON FOREVER BIO

For a number of years, this would have been an almost-blank page. Back in the mid-2010s, a few years after The Wonder Years had first formed in Lansdale, PA, just north of Philadelphia, the band would be asked to provide a bio for events they were playing. All Dan Campbell would write was ‘The Wonder Years is a band’. That was it. They’d then receive the programs for whatever festival or event it was for and laugh. Most bands, the frontman remembers, would write a “full page thing about how their last record charted and ours would just be a blank page with those six words at the top.” A lot of time has passed since then, and a lot has changed, although also not that much, at the same time. If The Wonder Years – completed by guitarists Matt Brasch and Casey Cavaliere, drummer Mike Kennedy, bassist Josh Martin and keyboardist/multi-instrumentalist Nick Steinborn – could get away with a six-word bio, they probably would.

As it happens, when it comes to *The Hum Goes On Forever*, context is important, which is why you’re reading these words. The most important reason is that this is the first record the band has made since Campbell became a father. And so, when he sings its very first words – ‘*I don’t want to die*’ – on its very first song, “Doors I Painted Shut”, they shimmer with a little extra poignancy and potency. Because as someone who has sung candidly about how despondent he’s felt at times, thoughts of unexistence are no longer possible. It doesn’t mean they stop, but Campbell can no longer succumb to the abject malaise they induce.

“You’ve got to pull it together,” he says, “because your kids are counting on you. These things that feel hopeless – these massive cultural and societal, full-populace problems like climate change and school shootings, all the things that you’re afraid of for your children – well, they only get fixed if you fix them. ‘I don’t want to die – because I’ve got to protect you.’ It would be very easy to give in to the depression and just kind of lay there, but my kids are counting on me, so I have to try to pull myself together and do the work.”

That, then, is the crux of this record: his survival is more important than it ever was before. As Campbell phrases it, “How do you take care of someone else that needs you when there are days that you barely want to exist?” Now that he’s a father, the answer is a lot simpler than it used to be. Quite simply, he doesn’t have a choice. Rather, he has to press on against the noise that’s been inside his brain for as long as he can remember. That’s what the ‘hum’ of this album’s title is. Taken from a poem he wrote for *Sister Cities*, it is, he says, a representation of the gloom he tends to carry with him.

“Even when it’s not constantly in my face,” he admits, “there’s always a low hum of sadness, a low rumbling of ennui. So *The Hum Goes On Forever* is the understanding that I’m always going to have it, it’s always going to be there, it’s always been there for literal generations of my family and it’s important that I accept that and live and work through it.”

*The Hum Goes On Forever*, then, is the sound of The Wonder Years navigating those dark, cold waters, bringing that ever-present pulse in the back of Campbell’s mind to vivid life, while also pushing it as far back into his skull as it will go. It’s the kind of effect that’s only achievable through true collaboration and understanding, something that defines how the band has operated from its inception. The six-piece wrote the bulk of these songs in a farmhouse in the middle of Pennsylvania in the winter of 2021. This was before vaccines were widely available, so they all quarantined for 14 days first. Then, after getting vaccinated, they wrote together again in March, April and May, before tracking songs in June. Initially, the idea was to just make an EP with Will Yip, but it instead became their seventh album, finished with Steve Evetts, after the band decided the songs would be under-served on an EP. The result is a record that captures the taught, fraught uncertainty of the period in which they were written, but also travels back in time and memory to uncover and dwell on and inhabit leftover remnants of the past. It serves,

too, as a revealing representation of how the six lives that constitute The Wonder Years interact with each other. That happens both inside and outside of the band, obviously, but in terms of the former, they've all grown together immensely as musicians. It means the band knows when to be restrained and when to explode, filling in space and emptiness as needed to create a record that mirrors, sonically, the heart-torn urgency at its core, the way these six individuals interact with each other, each an essential component of a greater whole - as well as the next evolution of a band that's never stopped growing, never stopped striving, never stopped searching for the truth and the heart of this dumb thing we call life.

It would be easy to talk about how specific songs do that, but that would also kind of defeat the point of this record. Because this is a complete journey and should be taken in as such. It begins in August and ends in June and traverses years and decades, as well as the constant cycle of sadness and healing within them. Except it never quite gets there. The hum is never totally shaken off.

"Because the tagline for *The Upsides* was 'I'm not sad anymore,'" Campbell explains, "I think people were like, 'This is the guy who *used* to be depressed.' But obviously that never goes away. It's a constant, and you basically have to co-exist with your sadness. It won't go away, but that doesn't mean that people don't rely on you and that you can stop. As we've continued to make records, that's manifested itself in different ways, but I don't think ever as clearly as it has on this record. This one is more clearly about me struggling and floundering and drowning at points. In fact, I think it's maybe even the most revealing in a lot of ways. There's things I'm singing about on this record that I wouldn't have had the guts to confront in myself prior to it – like being this open about how low I had gotten, starting in late 2019 and then tumbling into a pandemic, and just thinking and thinking and thinking..."

There's a lot of thinking on this record. A lot of thoughts. But the main one, the important one, is that very first line of the first song: *I don't want to die*. It's something he repeats and reiterates on final track "You're The Reason I Don't Want The World To End", which addresses the change in Campbell's purpose since becoming a dad. That's obvious enough from the title alone, but with the final line – inspired by gardening with his first son during the pandemic – the message becomes truly clear: *'Put the work in, plant a garden, try to stay afloat.'* It's a reminder to himself, but it's also for anyone who listens, anyone who needs it, everyone who's grown up with the band and has sought, and continues to seek, refuge in their songs. Because, yes, The Wonder Years *is* a band. But it's also much, much more than that.