

Rocket transcends space and time

Edie Brickell and New Bohemians launch latest release, *Rocket*, on October 12.
By S.D. Henderson

A LONG TIME AGO IN A DEEP ELLUM BAR far, far away; Edie Brickell and New Bohemians were an eclectic little collective making music that hadn't quite made it into the stratosphere. That would change dramatically with the 1988 release of *Shooting Rubberbands at the Stars*, a huge commercial success that proved the market for bands that just don't fit into a neat category.

Thirty years later, Edie Brickell and New Bohemians are still making music without compromise or guile. The October 12 release of *Rocket* provides a new launching pad to places yet unknown and undefined.

Listening to *Rocket*, from the first track "What Makes You Happy," you get the sense that you're hearing something for the first time that you've enjoyed for years.

It has a quality to it that defies space and time, and given the twelve-year gap since *Stranger Things*, you're happy to see it come around again. A lot of that can be credited to the unique, creative family atmosphere of New Bohemians and the timeless sound of Edie Brickell's vocals.

Released over thirty years after *Shooting Rubberbands*, Brickell's voice still carries that cool lightness on *Rocket*. Regardless of elapsed time from one album to the next, and all the life in between, there is a familiarity that remains consistent.

The happiness

John Bush longtime New Bohemian drummer and percussionist agrees, "You can hear the happiness. I think Edie's voice has even gotten better with age, she

still sounds young and youthful, vibrant and energetic. Her voice is amazing, and it has maturity to it now. (On *Rocket*) you can hear how much fun she's having."

You hear the happiness throughout *Rocket*, it's an affirming album that captures the spirit and vibe which has characterized the New Bohemians from their earliest days in Dallas.

Edie Brickell echoes that sentiment, "*Rocket* is special because the joy and passion of our band is palpable. We finally caught it live in the studio this time and you can really feel this record. The fun loving nature of NewBos comes through as well as the respect and reverence for a broad palate of music."

That shared love for diverse musical form is expressed throughout *Rocket* and has held the New Bohemians together despite long breaks between recording. There was never a rancorous painful, public breakup for New Bohemians (which is kind of a requirement for true bohemian-ness purposes).

Brickell placed a priority on raising her kids and the band understood the importance of that season. They continued to write and record together for years on summer band camp dates in New York and Texas,



There was never a rancorous painful, public breakup; original members John Bush, guitarist Kenny Withrow, Edie Brickell, Brandon Aly, and Brad Houser on bass; Edie Brickell and New Bohemians

keeping the shared connection to music and each other.

Nucleus intact

AS BUSH RELATES, "WE'VE always known we would continue to do stuff over the years. A few years ago, we got together for an event, and we knew then it was time for a new record." So with Brickell's kids grown, they started the process that would become *Rocket*.

From the early days through this one, the song-crafting process for New Bohemians is as organic as one might suspect. It's a collective effort bringing ideas to the table and experimenting with sound in real time, working around the room and finding the words and sounds that belong together, and the end result captures that essence.

Recorded in Austin at Arlyn Studios with producer Kyle Cushman, *Rocket* captures a feel that will translate not only to the

road but to a new creative period for the group. With Brickell up front, Kenny Withrow on guitar, Brad Houser on bass, John Bush and Brandon Aly on percussion; the longtime New Bohemian lineup still includes the nucleus, or at least electrons also very near the core, from the beginning.

Cushman's presence in the studio was formidable enough to bring him on as a member for the recording and the tour. Adding Matt Hubbard on keyboards and other musical things brings the number to seven and adds depth to an incredibly talented slate.

The Songs

THE FIRST TRACK FROM *Rocket* released for public consumption, "What Makes You Happy" sets the tone for the album in a manner that I'm struggling to describe accurately. It's fun without the meaninglessness

of pop. It's cool without the exclusivity. That probably doesn't help much. Maybe it's an experimental sound based on strong hypotheses? I think that might be it. Across each track you'll find newness and familiarity in the same few bars of music.

I loved listening to "Super Hero" and just thinking about how unique it sounded without trying to dissect it into little pieces; or to "Drawn to You" and just feeling the calmness saturate my brain. There are twelve years of creative collective expression on the thirteen tracks just now exposed to the air, so maybe this isn't the time for dissection. I think listening to *Rocket* requires a little more absorption for adequate critical processing, so I'll just enjoy it.

It's a new and exciting time for Edie Brickell and New Bohemians. *Rocket* will be released on October 12 and the band will kick off a tour the day before

back home in Dallas to celebrate new beginnings. Bush relates, "I've never been so excited for something, I've always appreciated that we've been able to do what we do, but now that you're a little older, you just appreciate it more." Dallas is the natural choice opening the tour, just a few miles and years from the beginning, there's a new audience and a new opportunity to share their music with the world.

Fortunately, New Bohemians aren't on a comet-like trajectory any longer. It shouldn't be another twelve years before the next sighting.

Regardless, they're here this week and you can catch *Rocket* on iTunes on October 12. Better still, make plans to see Edie Brickell and New Bohemians at the Granada Theater in Dallas on October 11, one day before *Rocket* launches. Go hear happiness, there's been an industry shortage for a while.

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—EDIE BRICKELL