**GHOSTLY KISSES**

**DARKROOM / TRACK X TRACK**

**1.** **There’s No More Space**

 Feelings of depression and boredom were recurring themes in the testimonies shared on the **Box of Secrets**. The song **There's No More Space** centers around the longing for a lost connection. Its lyrics convey a sense of tedium and monotony in wakefulness, in stark contrast to the yearning to retreat into dreams where that cherished connection remains intact.

Drawing inspiration from early 2000s productions such as Frou Frou, the piece unfolds with intricate string arrangements by Gabriel Desjardins, masterfully executed by the FAME’S Orchestra in North Macedonia. This collaboration imbues the music with a magical and dreamlike quality.

Louis’ words on the song: “For **There's No More Space** the ideation and the production process happened very quickly, probably 85% over the course of one day. The flow was very natural and involved little second-guessing. The whole idea emerged from childhood memories of how a portion of pop music sounded at the end of the 90’s and early 2000’s. Strings, Gregorian choirs, laid-back beats (loosely à la J Dilla), syncopated bass grooves, luminous orchestral instruments and samples constitute the bulk of the music supporting Margaux’s delicate vocals. The music is set to complement the vocal melody and the lyrics as much as possible, with many tiny elements (or silence) to amplify what Margaux is saying. For instance, the ghost-like repeating vocals in

between phrases in the verse are meant as an expression of dullness of repeating days, etc.”

 **2.** **Keep It Real**

 **Keep It Real** stands out as the darkest and most impactful track on the album. Its tone is steeped in melancholy, articulating the profound pain and disillusionment that accompanies being in a relationship where the other person lacks sincerity. It conveys a sense of confusion and frustration about the other person's true feelings and intentions. It was inspired by the narratives shared in the **Box of Secrets**, where individuals wrestled with deciphering the thoughts of others and sought to shed light on complex situations.

Tenebrous synths mark the entrance of the song, which then evolves into a full-blown groovy backbeat. We wanted to create as many melodic hooks as possible, while keeping the harmonic direction voluntarily changing to put emphasis on the story behind the song. One could almost see it as a dialog between a strong character that drives everything forward, demanding clarity (vocals, drums) and this troubled, doubled-faced, and ever-changing character that can act deceitfully (synths, bends, samples, etc.).

 **3.** **Golden Eyes**

 In **Golden Eyes**, Margaux talks about being in love with her best friend and how gauche she could feel when she finally admitted it to him. Margaux also wrote these lyrics in reaction to the **Box of Secrets’** testimonies; about how hard and vertiginous it can be to express our true feelings to someone that we really love. The verses are intimate, almost like Margaux’ revealing her secret, and then the music opens in the choruses, uplifting the song with light and catchy melodies.

Producer Louis-Étienne Santais’ words on the song: “George Fitzgerald and I had a wonderful time playing with sounds that took their roots from the 90-00’s dance/garage scene and 90’s new age (Enigma), while trying to remain faithful to **Ghostly Kisses’** more modern sound. Time will tell if people adopt it, but we’re very proud of that record.”

**4.** **Lonesome Hero**

 The song **Lonesome Hero** explores the themes of isolation, invisibility, and the internal struggle, inspired from a striking message on the **Box of Secrets** about someone's previous struggle with anorexia and the profound sense of isolation she endured. It painted a picture of a world that seemed incompatible with her existence, where each day presented itself as a relentless battle.

The most harmonically complex song on the album, this piece showcases a slight duality in between the verses and the choruses. The verses are stripped back to a minimum, only featuring a single voice on top of simple synths and pads (or minimal percussion) to emphasize the feeling of loneliness and helplessness of the protagonist. The choruses are fuller and include layers upon layers of voices, as to symbolize the multitudes of people who care for this person and see her as a kind of lonesome hero, recognizing her worth, but also feeling unable to truly connect or help. Louis’ words on the song: “Oli Bayston really helped to bring this sense

of contrast forward, with the addition of a plethora of super soulful synths, a pounding drum groove and a bass that gives a kind of “push and pull” feeling.”

**5.** **Ocean**

 **Ocean** is about self-realization and independence, crafted as a danceable anthem that encourages listeners to immerse themselves in the music and experience a sense of liberation. The song addresses the aftermath of a friendship that has profoundly affected the protagonist, using the metaphor of an ocean to symbolize the depth and breadth of the emotional journey undertaken during this relationship.

At its core, **Ocean** champions the theme of self-reliance, encapsulated in the empowering refrain, "I can do this on my own." This line echoes the song's message of personal strength and autonomy. A key moment in the song is the realization encapsulated by "The story wasn’t mine," a line that underscores the importance of embracing one's unique journey.

Overall, **Ocean** is a narrative of personal growth and emotional resilience, emphasizing the significance of carving out one's own path in life. In the words of Margaux: "**Ocean** was crafted to instill a sense of inner strength and power in listeners. It underscores the idea that, despite the fears associated with independence, everyone possesses a formidable inner strength."

Louis’ words on the song: “**Ocean** is a happy and celebratory song in **Ghostly Kisses’** world. It’s mixolydian harmony was chosen on purpose for its kind of “liberative” flavor, a bit like you would experience when listening to Lorde’s “Royals” or” Greenlight” or “Shake it Off” by Taylor Swift. This is reinforced by the “UK Garage” type of feeling present in the first half of the song, and then by the four-to-the-floor drum transition, supplemented by the “Cher” and “Venga Boys” types of bass and synths bouncing around it. Oli Bayston really helped to bring out more colors in this one, especially in the groove and synths-heavy parts of the song. The exploration of different vocal textures is helpful in the progression of the story of the song, which is centered around the “liberation” of the protagonist from a toxic and overly dramatic friendship.”

**6.** **Calm Down**

 The song **Calm Down** encapsulates numerous themes explored in the **Box of Secrets**. It delves into the challenges of living with anxiety, navigating depression, grappling with the inability to be with a loved one, and contending with the complexities of unclear relationships. These significant topics have been prevalent in the narratives shared within the **Box of Secrets**.

The song encompasses various themes, and each lyric carries its distinct significance. The repetition of "Calm down, calm down" throughout the song serves as a reflection of the internal dialogue one might have when grappling with anxiety and attempting self-soothing. It is also a plea to calm down and communicate truthfully, respectfully and, if possible, rationally. "This is all I want" represents an effort to assert one's desires to the other person. Many individuals grapple with the challenge of expressing their true sentiments to those who matter to them.

Margaux's perspective on the song: "'Maybe we can figure it out' is my attempt to convey to the audience that perhaps together, we can find a way for you to improve your well-being, be true to yourself, and choose to be with the person you desire."

Louis’ words on the song: “In terms of production, **Calm Down** was one of the toughest nuts to crack during the process of the album. We had to complete like 27 different iterations of the instrumental with different co-producers to end up with this version of the song. Oli Bayston really went out of his way to reharmonize and rebuild the entire synths arsenal around our vocal melodies and harmonies. I was so sure of this song’s potential that I would never quit trying to get it to a “radio-friendly” space musically speaking. When Oli sent us this version, I was appeased and quite satisfied with it!”

**7.** **On & Off**

**On & Off** is about a complex relationship between two persons who have a deep connection. They understand each other on a profound level, often communicating without the need for words. However, their relationship is marked by its ups and downs, characterized by misunderstandings, miscommunications, and the challenges of growing up. Despite their undeniable connection, they often find themselves at odds, pushing each other away and then drawing closer again.

These lyrics draw inspiration from the testimonials shared within the **Box of Secrets**, illustrating a recurring pattern found in roller coaster relationships. These narratives have been gleaned from various stories within the **Ghostly Kisses'** community. It becomes evident that the themes of love, loss, and the struggles of sustaining a connection with someone from the past are universally relatable, transcending geographical boundaries and resonating with individuals from diverse backgrounds and locations.

Producer Louis-Étienne Santais' thoughts on the song: “For **On & Off**, Oli and I aimed to keep it as straightforward and digestible as possible. As always, the primary focus is on the melody and vocals, while leaving space for certain production elements to shine at times. It's a playful exploration into the synth-pop/indie-pop realm, inspired by the idea of how a band would optimize the composition for a live performance. We intentionally preserved room for human imperfections, enabling live recordings of various instruments to be edited with less quantization or temporal rigidity. Oli added a lot to this track, incorporating very cool parts and synth sounds to the whole production, which makes everything much more interesting in my opinion.”

 **8.** **Silver Screen**

 **Silver Screen** could have been written directly out of a movie scene, at least, this is how Louis-Étienne and Margaux pictured it.

This song captures the essence of that delicate moment when we wake up, our eyes still halfway closed, hovering between sleep and wakefulness. As we quietly absorb our surroundings, we find ourselves questioning whether we are still immersed in a dream or if reality has set in.

Margaux’s words on **Silver Screen**: “To convey the vulnerability of this particular moment, we opted to record the vocals in a single, uninterrupted take, seeking to preserve the authenticity and rawness of the experience.”

Louis’ words on the song: “**Silver Screen** was born out of a fascination with vintage ballads and jazz sad standards. The pure melancholy of, among others, classical songs like “Almost Blue” by Chet Baker or “Gloomy Sunday” (Rezső Seress), was something we were always intrigued in trying to conjure in a **Ghostly Kisses**’ composition. This melody had been resting for years in my “voice notes” folder, so, when we found it, we instantly knew we had to bring it to life. Oli helped us to take it in a bit of a trip-hop direction, all the while keeping the simplicity of the original arrangement intact.”

 **9.** **Crimson**

 The song **Crimson** holds significant importance within **Darkroom**, primarily due to the emotional depth of the themes it explores. The genesis of **Crimson** can be traced back to numerous messages received on the **Box of Secrets**, revealing confessions of homosexuality and the challenges individuals face in expressing or living their love due to familial or societal constraints. Additionally, the song delves into the Iranian protest movement sparked by the tragic death of Mahsa Amini and advocates for women's freedom.

“I know it’s not us, I know it’s not us, I know it’s not us to flee and hush I know it’s not us, I know it’s not us, they bruise they crush, they kill the love instead”. Margaux on these lyrics: “This passage vividly captures the intensity of their emotions - the profound anger, the deep-seated pain, and an unwavering resolve to persist in the fight for their rights and freedoms. Through **Crimson**, we are offered a powerful medium to amplify the voices of those who are silenced.”

Words on **Crimson**’s production:

* The most lyrically intense song of the album, like one could almost assume it would be, is completed with the most intense musical production on there as well. Many choices are very intentional throughout the song:
* The song starts with an intense chorus that focuses the attention on “If I could only find a way out” almost instantly.
* The almost organ-like prophet is repeating very simple intense chords so that the emphasis is on the emotion transmitted by the voice.
* Verses are sung by one voice. Then, the message comes “I know it’s us”, progressively joined by more and more voices as a metaphor of how a movement starts. Very stripped back arrangements when those voices come on.
* Heavily distorted cello solo as a musical suggestion that truth and pure human emotions often manage to find their way out of brutal environments, although sometimes reaching the surface damaged.

 **10.** **Within**

 The song **Within** delves into the overarching theme of choices—specifically, the multitude of decisions that life presents as we transition into young adulthood. It underscores the significance of these choices in shaping the trajectory of our life's journey.

Margaux’s words on **Within**: “**Within** posed a unique challenge during the lyric-writing process, given its inherent lack of a definitive answer. I'm not sure if the listeners expect us to give definite answers in our songs… but I prefer to perceive my role as that of a questioner too. The one thing I've come to believe is that the answer to any choice lies within the person making it.”

Louis’ words on Within: “**Within**, for me, is a quite quirky-sounding and magical song. The lyrics subtly incorporate a kind of imagery that relates to some of Lewis Carroll’s worlds. The music is, at least in part, abstractly reflective of this imagery. Vocoders, shimmering icy synths, weird bending elements, music boxes, and very pointy drum sounds are all elements that immerse you in that otherworldly atmosphere. We didn’t even speak about it, but, interestingly, all the sounds that Oli Bayston designed fit right in that spectrum.”

**11.** **Beneath The Clouds**
**Beneath The Clouds** is among the initial compositions for the album. It narrates the story of a friend grappling with depression and isolation, someone who struggles to communicate openly or reveal their true feelings, making it challenging to truly understand their state of mind.

Margaux’s words on the song: “Additionally, the song acts as a conduit through which I extend a hand to those suffering in silence, encouraging them to open and remember that they are surrounded by people who care for them deeply.”

**Beneath The Clouds** started off from the vague idea that we wanted to have a song based on strings, drums, syncopated bass, and vocals only. The higher tempo is meant for people to experience it physically when we’ll play it live and be able to groove or dance to it. A high energy song with an emotional charge or a “cry on the dancefloor” is what we tried to create.

**12.** **Carousel**

 **Carousel** delves into the aftermath of a breakup, capturing the sensation of time crawling when separated from a loved one and the agony that every passing second brings. The lyrics meticulously depict the intricate details experienced during a carousel ride, where one's attention desperately attempts to seize every fleeting moment, persuading itself to divert focus, to convince that the absence of the other person is no longer essential. When listening to the song, the aim is to truly experience the sensation of the wind, while your heart feels tight, and the same unanswered questions continue to swirl in your mind.

Margaux’s words on the song: “Reading the **Box of Secrets**, someone made a reference about doing carousel rides over and over and I thought the image was so strong and I related so much to it. When I'm feeling down, my usual recourse is to take a walk or go for a bike ride in parks or in nature to feel the wind on my face. It makes me feel alive somehow.”