

KATE FAIRMAN

SOUND OF THE AGES EPIOSDE 3

I'M KATE FAIRMAN AND YOU'RE LISTENING TO EPISODE 3 OF SOUND OF THE AGES. THE LAST TWO EPISODES, I WENT IN-DEPTH INTO THE HISTORY OF ROCK MUSIC. THIS EPISODE MARKS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW SERIES OF EPISODES THAT DIVE INTO THE BACKGROUND OF HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL ROCK ARTISTS. THIS EPISODE, I WILL BE RETELLING THE COMPLETE MUSICAL HISTORY OF THE ARTIST BECK.

[“DREAMS” IN]

BORN AS BEK DAVID CAMPBELL ON JULY 8, 1970 IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, AMERICAN SINGER, SONGWRITER, RECORD PRODUCER, AND MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST BECK ROSE TO FAME IN THE EARLY 1990S WITH HIS EXPERIMENTAL AND LO-FI STYLE, AND BECAME KNOWN FOR BEING EXTREMELY EXPERIMENTAL WITH HIS MUSIC. TODAY, HE ENCOMPASSES FOLK, SOUL, HIP HOP, FUNK, ELECTRONIC, ALTERNATIVE ROCK, COUNTRY, AND PSYCHEDELIA. DESPITE THE SUCCESS THAT BECK HAS HAD AS A MUSICIAN, HIS START IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY AND HIS EARLY LIFE ARE NOT WHAT YOU WOULD IMAGINE AN ARTIST OF BECK'S FAME TO HAVE HAD. FEELING LIKE "A TOTAL OUTCAST", BECK DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL AFTER MIDDLE SCHOOL. HE LATER SAID THAT ALTHOUGH HE FELT SCHOOL WAS IMPORTANT, HE FELT UNSAFE THERE. WHEN HE WAS 16, BECK RECEIVED HIS FIRST GUITAR, APPLIED TO A PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL, AND BEGAN PERFORMING AS A STREET MUSICIAN. DESPITE HIS PASSION FOR THE ARTS, HE WAS REJECTED FROM THE PERFORMING ARTS SCHOOL. WITH NOWHERE ELSE TO GO, BECK WORKED MENIAL JOBS SUCH AS LOADING TRUCKS AND OPERATING LEAF BLOWERS AND HUNG AROUND LOS ANGELES CITY COLLEGE, USING A FAKE ID TO SIT IN ON CLASSES. IN 1989, BECK CAUGHT A BUS TO NEW YORK CITY WITH LITTLE MORE THAN EIGHT DOLLARS AND A GUITAR. WHILE HE WAS IN NEW YORK, HE WAS INSPIRED BY THE FREEDOM AND BY THE LOCAL SPOKEN-WORD PERFORMERS. BECK BEGAN TO WRITE FREE-ASSOCIATIVE, SURREALISTIC SONGS ABOUT PIZZA, MTV,

AND WORKING AT MCDONALD'S, TURNING MUNDANE THOUGHTS INTO SONGS. THAT YEAR, HE SPENT THE SUMMER ATTEMPTING TO FIND A JOB AND A PLACE TO LIVE WITH LITTLE SUCCESS. DAUNTED BY THE IDEA OF ANOTHER HOMELESS NEW YORK WINTER, BECK RETURNED TO HIS HOME OF LOS ANGELES IN 1991. VIRTUALLY AN UNKNOWN TO THE PUBLIC, BECK WOULD HOP ON STAGE BETWEEN ACTS IN LOCAL CLUBS AND PLAY "STRANGE FOLK SONGS", ACCOMPANIED BY WHAT COULD BEST BE DESCRIBED AS PERFORMANCE ART WHILE SOMETIMES WEARING A STAR WARS STORMTROOPER MASK. EVENTUALLY, BECK GAINED KEY BOOSTERS IN MARGARET MITTLEMAN, THE WEST COAST'S DIRECTOR OF TALENT ACQUISITIONS FOR BMG MUSIC PUBLISHING, AND THE PARTNERS BEHIND INDEPENDENT RECORD LABEL BONG LOAD CUSTOM RECORDS.

[“LOSER” IN]

AS SOON AS HE WAS SIGNED, BECK BEGAN PRODUCING HIS SONG “LOSER” WITH HIS NEW LABEL. BONG LOAD CUSTOM RECORDS ISSUED "LOSER" AS A SINGLE IN MARCH 1993, HOWEVER BECK FELT THAT "LOSER" WAS MEDIOCRE, AND ONLY AGREED TO ITS RELEASE AT HIS NEW LABEL'S INSISTENCE. MUCH TO BECK’S SURPRISE "LOSER" RECEIVED RADIO AIRPLAY, STARTING IN LOS ANGELES, WHERE COLLEGE RADIO STATION KXLU WAS THE FIRST TO PLAY IT. SOON AFTER, ANOTHER LOS ANGELES RADIO STATION INVITED HIM TO COME AND DO A LIVE PERFORMANCE OF LOSER. BECK PERFORMED HIS NEW SINGLE AT THE LOS ANGELES CLUB “CAFE TROY” TO A PACKED AUDIENCE, ALONG WITH TALENT SCOUTS FROM MAJOR LABELS. A FIERCE BIDDING WAR ENSUED, WITH GEFEN RECORDS A&R DIRECTOR MARK KATES SIGNING BECK IN DECEMBER 1993 DESPITE INTENSE COMPETITION FROM WARNER BROS. AND CAPITOL. BY THE TIME BECK RELEASED HIS FIRST ALBUM FOR GEFEN, THE LOW-BUDGET, GENRE-BLENDING ALBUM *MELLOW GOLD* ON MARCH 1, "LOSER" WAS ALREADY IN THE TOP 40 AND ITS VIDEO IN MTV'S BUZZ BIN. “LOSER" QUICKLY ASCENDED THE CHARTS IN THE U.S., REACHING A PEAK OF NUMBER TEN ON THE BILLBOARD HOT 100 SINGLES CHART AND TOPPING THE MODERN ROCK TRACKS

CHART. COMBINED WITH THE SONG'S WILDLY POPULAR MUSIC VIDEO AND THE WORLD TOUR, BECK BELIEVED THE ATTENTION COULD NOT LAST, RESULTING IN A STATUS AS A "ONE-HIT WONDER."

[“WHERE IT’S AT” IN]

BECK’S NEXT ALBUM, ODELAY, WAS RELEASED ON JUNE 18, 1996, TO COMMERCIAL SUCCESS AND CRITICAL ACCLAIM. THE RECORD PRODUCED SEVERAL HIT SINGLES, INCLUDING "WHERE IT'S AT", "DEVIL'S HAIRCUT", AND "THE NEW POLLUTION", AND WAS NOMINATED FOR THE GRAMMY AWARD FOR ALBUM OF THE YEAR IN 1997, WINNING A GRAMMY AWARD FOR BEST ALTERNATIVE MUSIC ALBUM AS WELL AS A GRAMMY AWARD FOR BEST MALE ROCK VOCAL PERFORMANCE FOR "WHERE IT'S AT." SOON AFTER THIS, BECK BEGAN WORKING ON HIS NEW ALBUM MUTATIONS. THOUGH THE ALBUM WAS ORIGINALLY SLATED FOR RELEASE BY BONG LOAD CUSTOM RECORDS, GEFEN INTERVENED AND ISSUED THE RECORD AGAINST BECK’S WISHES. THE ARTIST THEN SOUGHT TO VOID HIS CONTRACTS WITH BOTH RECORD LABELS, AND IN TURN THE LABELS SUED HIM FOR BREACH OF CONTRACT. BECK WAS LATER AWARDED BEST ALTERNATIVE MUSIC PERFORMANCE FOR MUTATIONS AT THE 42ND GRAMMY AWARDS.

MIDNITE VULTURES, BECK’S NEXT STUDIO EFFORT, WAS ORIGINALLY RECORDED AS A DOUBLE ALBUM, AND MORE THAN 25 NEARLY COMPLETED SONGS WERE LEFT BEHIND. WHILE CREATING THIS ALBUM, BECK AND HIS PRODUCERS STUDIED CONTEMPORARY HIP HOP AND R&B, SPECIFICALLY R. KELLY, IN ORDER TO EMBRACE AND INCORPORATE THOSE INFLUENCES. MIDNITE VULTURES WAS LATER NOMINATED FOR BEST ALBUM AT THE 43RD ANNUAL GRAMMY AWARDS.

[“LOST CAUSE” IN]

IN 2000, BECK AND HIS FIANCÉE, STYLIST LEIGH LIMON, ENDED THEIR NINE-YEAR RELATIONSHIP. BECK LAPSED INTO A PERIOD OF DEPRESSION, DURING WHICH HE WROTE THE SAD-SOUNDING, ACOUSTIC-BASED TRACKS LATER FOUND ON HIS ALBUM SEA CHANGE, WHICH HE RELEASED IN 2002. BECK WAS

RELUCTANT TO RELEASE THE SONGS, NOT WANTING TO TALK ABOUT HIS PERSONAL LIFE, BUT HE LATER DECIDED THE SONGS SPOKE TO A COMMON EXPERIENCE, MEANING A RELATIONSHIP BREAKUP, AND THAT IT WOULD NOT SEEM SELF-INDULGENT TO RECORD THEM. FOLLOWING THE RELEASE OF SEA CHANGE, BECK FELT NEWER COMPOSITIONS WERE SKETCHES FOR SOMETHING MORE EVOLVED IN THE SAME DIRECTION, AND WROTE NEARLY 35 MORE SONGS IN THE COMING MONTHS, KEEPING DEMOS OF THEM ON TAPES IN A SUITCASE.

[“E-PRO” IN]

GUERO, BECK'S EIGHTH STUDIO ALBUM, WAS RECORDED OVER THE SPAN OF NINE MONTHS DURING WHICH SEVERAL SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OCCURRED IN HIS LIFE: HIS GIRLFRIEND, MARISSA RIBISI, BECAME PREGNANT; THEY WERE MARRIED; THEIR SON, COSIMO, WAS BORN; AND THEY MOVED OUT OF SILVER LAKE. GUERO DEBUTED AT NUMBER TWO ON THE BILLBOARD 200, SELLING 162,000 COPIES, AN ALL-TIME SALES HIGH. LEAD SINGLE "E-PRO" PEAKED AT NUMBER TWO AT MODERN ROCK RADIO, MAKING IT HIS FIRST CHART-TOPPER SINCE "LOSER".

[“THINK I'M IN LOVE” IN]

THE INFORMATION, BECK'S NINTH STUDIO ALBUM, BEGAN PRODUCTION AROUND THE SAME TIME AS GUERO, IN 2003. BECK DESCRIBED THE RECORDING PROCESS AS "PAINFUL", NOTING THAT HE EDITED DOWN SONGS CONSTANTLY AND HE PERHAPS RECORDED THE ALBUM THREE TIMES. FOR THE RELEASE, BECK WAS ALLOWED FOR THE FIRST TIME TO FULFILL A LONG-RUNNING WISH FOR AN UNCONVENTIONAL ROLLOUT: HE MADE LOW-BUDGET VIDEOS TO ACCOMPANY EACH SONG, PACKAGED THE CD WITH SHEETS OF STICKERS SO BUYERS COULD CUSTOMIZE THE COVER, AND LEAKED TRACKS AND VIDEOS ON HIS WEBSITE MONTHS AHEAD OF THE ALBUM'S RELEASE.

[“TIMEBOMB” IN]

IN 2007, BECK RELEASED THE SINGLE "TIMEBOMB", WHICH WAS NOMINATED FOR A GRAMMY AWARD FOR BEST SOLO ROCK VOCAL PERFORMANCE. TIMEBOMB WAS LATER INCLUDED IN BECK'S NEXT STUDIO ALBUM, MODERN GUILT, WHICH WAS RELEASED IN 2008. MODERN GUILT WAS THE FINAL RELEASE IN BECK'S CONTRACT WITH GEFLEN RECORDS. RELEASED FROM HIS LABEL CONTRACT AND GOING INDEPENDENT, BECK BEGAN WORKING MORE HEAVILY ON HIS OWN SEVEN-YEAR-OLD LABEL.

[“BLUE MOON” IN]

IN OCTOBER 2013, IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT BECK SIGNED TO CAPITOL RECORDS. ON JANUARY 20, 2014, BECK RELEASED THE TRACK "BLUE MOON," WHICH WAS TO BE THE LEAD SINGLE FOR HIS TWELFTH STUDIO ALBUM, MORNING PHASE. ON FEBRUARY 8, 2015, AT THE 57TH ANNUAL GRAMMY AWARDS, MORNING PHASE WON THREE GRAMMYS: BEST ENGINEERED ALBUM, NON-CLASSICAL; BEST ROCK ALBUM; AND ALBUM OF THE YEAR. UPON RECEIVING THE ALBUM OF THE YEAR AWARD, THE ALBUM BEAT OUT PHARRELL WILLIAMS'S G I R L, BEYONCÉ'S SELF-TITLED ALBUM, SAM SMITH'S IN THE LONELY HOUR, AND ED SHEERAN'S X.

[“WOW” IN]

SHORTLY AFTER MORNING PHASE'S GRAMMY WINS, ON JUNE 15, 2015, BECK RELEASED THE FIRST SINGLE TITLED "DREAMS" OFF HIS UPCOMING THIRTEENTH STUDIO ALBUM. HOWEVER, NO FURTHER WORD WAS HEARD FROM BECK PERTAINING TO THE RELEASE OF THE ALBUM. ON JUNE 2, 2016, ALMOST A YEAR AFTER THE INITIAL RELEASE OF "DREAMS," BECK RELEASED A NEW SINGLE TITLED "WOW", ALONG WITH A LYRIC VIDEO OF THE SONG AND AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HIS STILL UNTITLED ALBUM WOULD BE RELEASED ON OCTOBER 21, 2016. IN SEPTEMBER 2016, THE ALBUM WAS DELAYED WITH NO NEW RELEASE DATE ANNOUNCED AND, ON SEPTEMBER 24, BECK SAID HE DIDN'T KNOW WHEN IT WAS COMING OUT. NO FURTHER SINGLES WERE RELEASED AND NO NEW RELEASE DATE WAS SCHEDULED FOR THE ALBUM. ON AUGUST 11, 2017, BECK ANNOUNCED THAT HIS

THIRTEENTH STUDIO ALBUM WOULD BE TITLED COLORS AND WOULD BE RELEASED ON OCTOBER 13.

SEVERAL SONGS WERE CONFIRMED TO APPEAR ON THE ALBUM, INCLUDING "DREAMS," "WOW," AND A TRACK TITLED "UP ALL NIGHT" THAT HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY INCLUDED ON THE FIFA 17 SOUNDTRACK.

THIS CONCLUDES THE MUSICAL BACKGROUND OF BECK UP UNTIL NOW, AND MARKS THE END OF EPISODE 3 OF SOUND OF THE AGES. MORE STORIES AND PODCASTS LIKE THIS CAN BE FOUND AT WHJE.COM.