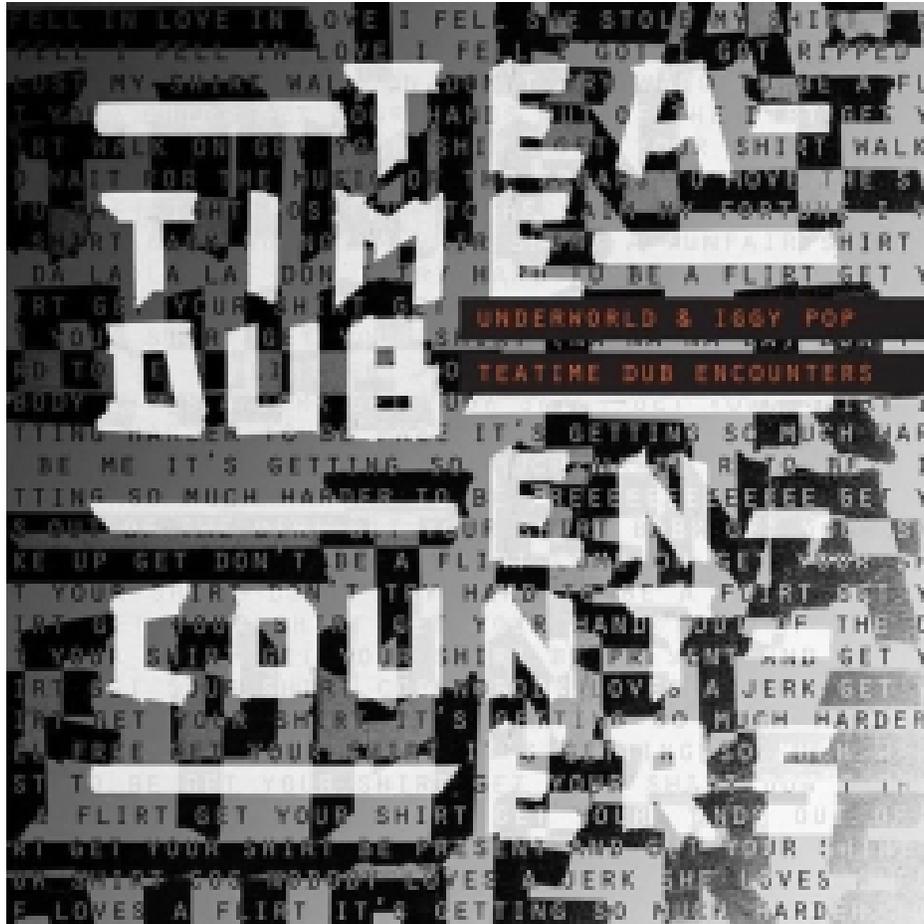


Underworld & Iggy Pop: Teatime Dub Encounters EP

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Underworld's new *Teatime Dub Encounters* EP with Iggy Pop is a celebration of the ancient marriage between repetitive music and cynical harangues, so lovingly consummated in the past by Alan Vega, Mark E. Smith, John Cooper Clarke, Sleaford Mods, Bingo Gazingo, Wesley Willis, Courtney Barnett and so on. Underworld has long made use of Karl Hyde's stream-of-conscious slam poetry, but Pop is so much more charismatic than Hyde (and just about everyone else) that this strange-on-paper pairing starts to feel more inevitable than anything else.

Maybe it was fate that brought them together. Their music—Pop's "Lust for Life" and Underworld's raver anthem "Born Slippy (Nuxx)" bookended the '90s cult film *Trainspotting*, and the sessions were originally intended to accompany last year's sequel *T2 Trainspotting* before an independent project began to blossom. Funnily enough, they each dropped their last albums on March 20, 2016, and I reviewed them together for another website; if Pop read what I said about his, that'd explain his wish on "Bells & Circles" for a world with "*no more rock critics*."

His neurotic rants are so much more entertaining here on *Post Pop Depression*, with its

creative suggestions on where to put your laptop. And with their palpitating beats and shimmering synth pads, Underworld achieves some of the same uplift as on the heaven-scraping *Barbara Barbara, We Face a Shining Future*. When Pop pines for the days when you could smoke on airplanes, the blinding light of Underworld's beat apotheosizes his old-fart grumbling into a sort of utopian vision.

Pop's funny, too. One anecdote on "Bells & Circles" concerns getting wasted off coke to work up enough confidence to get a flight attendant's phone number. "*I got the number; that was the good news,*" says Pop. "*The bad news is I got so stoned I lost the number!*" The humor isn't so much in the situation as the perfect oy-gevalt tone Pop uses; we can imagine him throwing his hands up in the air. And the stone-faced sincerity of Underworld's beat makes for a hilarious contrast.

"I'll See Big" is a quiet reminiscence that puts Pop's grizzled voice into soft focus and resembles his great collaboration with Oneohtrix Point Never on "The Pure and the Damned." "Get Your Shirt" seems to reflect on Pop being shoehorned into the role of wild man, and it's as deflating to hear a guy who seems allergic to anything covering his torso telling you to put some clothes on as it is to hear John declare he doesn't believe in The Beatles. The only true clunker is "Trapped," a rock 'n' roll-as-techno joint that doesn't register as much beyond Suicide pastiche.

There's one overarching issue—minor—which keeps the collaboration from being as good as it could have been. Underworld's sound design is maximal, all-encompassing, with drums clattering at you from the margins of the stereo field. Pop occupies the dead center of the mix, and at times he sounds like he's being swallowed by the beat rather than riding it. We can hear what he says, no problem, but he sounds like a speck on the wind—a scuff mark on a three-piece suit—when he should sound like a big spider crouching in the middle of the music.