

## Sycamore Age – Castaways

*Castaways* - title of Sycamore Age's third studio album - draws upon the concept and theme of the first track of the album '*Castaways Without a Storm*'. Even though *Castaways* is not a concept album - every track tells its own story - we chose this title as it seemed to best represent the album, and the contemporary sentiment it conveys.

*Castaways Without a Storm* wants to narrate that sense of disorientation and desolation that is typical of the survivors of a shipwreck, a kind of PTSD. In this case though the 'virtual castaways' find themselves experiencing this condition even if they were never part of a traumatic event like a shipwreck, just like most of us humans of our time.

History, literature, and science teach us that - after a first moment of natural desperation and confusion - every catastrophe can be followed by an incredible and almost unstoppable momentum towards some kind of rebirth - towards *life* in general – an adrenalinic rush of reactive energy that often turns the tide and brings about a change to something better than what came before the crisis. For example we could think of Italy where, after the two world wars and half a century of unspeakable atrocities, there was the economic boom, there was a cultural ferment of a scope never seen before in the country, or at least since the renaissance: the movie industry, visual arts, the Italian design of the 50's and 60's, etc.

On the other hand those who become 'castaways' without facing a storm or any actual tragedy that would trigger this state of being: a condition that strongly hinders any attempt at renewal, restoration, and rebirth. This could suggest that our western civilization has been slipping so slowly and imperceptibly towards the pit that no one could notice. Moreover the spread of this general sense of disorientation, and of a lack of connection between individuals paradoxically takes place in what will probably be remembered in a distant future as the 'era of communication'.

Speaking of communication it's obvious how easy it is to communicate in our time: just over a hundred years ago all we had were post-coaches and carrier-pidgoens, while nowadays anyone with even the smallest resources can communicate with the world in real-time, with 200 grams of the highest technology in their pocket, and a wide choice of platforms and available media at the tip of their fingers. Another paradoxical situation: on one hand distances have been effectively annulled - it's possible today to talk or video-chat with anyone whenever and where we want – and on the other hand it seems increasingly difficult to listen and to be heard profoundly. Maybe feeling don't just need words or images to be conveyed, maybe they primarily need someone who takes the care and the time to be open and to listen.

We've all been in the situation where you think you're starting a conversation, but find yourself being the victim of a soliloquy where, even if you see a window to take your turn in the conversation, you perceive a depressing lack of attention from the other side. The result is a hypertrophic and frantic communication that is deprived of profounder empathy, and devoid of authentic relationship.

These reflections on the perception of an increasing difficulty to communicate brought us to the concept for the artwork. The album presents itself bare, almost cryptical and without of any hint that allows it to be deciphered. Looking closely one can guess that the punctured holes in sequence - behind them we get a glimpse of a seductive world made of a colorful,

iridescent holography – want to tell us something: one must look beyond the immediate appearance and make an effort decipher the message and enter into that world. Turning the LP's sleeve we see that one side is white and one is black: two opposites alternating like in a tao.

The alternation of dots and dashes reveals it to be a message in morse code. Morse again strongly evokes maritime settings, a binary language *ante litteram*, and, although today it's almost forgotten, it was very significant for the history of communication marking the beginning of this era.

Not everyone knows morse code, or can translate binary language (Google does!): it will be the task of the person reading the message to look it up and learn how to translate it. Ultimately the artwork wants to be a delicate and poetic provocation: “wake from your slumber, and make the effort to crack the code, beyond it there might be rare and enchanting emotions”. It is these emotions, translated into the eight tracks of our album, that we would like to share with those who will listen.