

"As a collection, it's a statement of intent," Bell X1 frontman/songwriter Paul Noonan says of his band's new Yep Roc release *Blue Lights on the Runway*. "For me it's hard to separate the songs from how they were made and the wild and frothy sea of change that the band were trying to hold steady through. I think we pushed ourselves creatively and tried to go places we hadn't been"

*Blue Lights on the Runway*, Bell X1's fourth studio effort, marks a quantum creative leap for the Dublin combo, which has already earned an enviable reputation for its artfully constructed song and playfully introspective lyrics. On the new album, the band – singer Paul Noonan, guitarist Dave Geraghty and bassist Dominic Phillips – delivers a compelling set of melodically infectious, emotionally resonant new tunes whose colorful lyrics are informed by an assortment of offbeat observations and unconventional personal experiences. Such memorable numbers as "Light Catches Your Face," "How Your Heart Is Wired," "The Great Defector," "Blow Ins," "One String Harp" and the self-referentially witty "A Better Band" boast indelible melodic hooks and inventive arrangements, while deftly blending organic and electronic textures.

*Blue Lights on the Runway* (which the band co-produced with Phil Hayes) substantially reinvents Bell X1's sound, thanks in large part to the group's distinctive use of an arsenal of synthesizers and samplers, which the band uses to build distinctive soundscapes that brilliantly complement the tunes.

"I think the beats and synths are the core of the drama of the record, the theatre of it," Noonan says, adding, "The original premise was to come up with songs that could stand up and make sense if delivered with a single voice and instrument, and then dress them in beats and noises from boxes. We stuck to that approach in some cases, but in some of the songs the 'dressing' felt a little gratuitous, so we left them be. So the album ended up as a bit of a mongrel, and I think it's the better for it."

*Blue Lights on the Runway* is the first Bell X1 album to receive a simultaneous worldwide release and is Bell X1's first new release since its international breakthrough *Flock*. That album debuted at Number One in Ireland, where it was certified Platinum five times over. Despite reaching North America nearly three years after its U.K. release, *Flock* also earned Bell X1 a large American fan base, where the band toured extensively and received a flood of critical acclaim.

In a four-star album review, Paste magazine called Bell X1 "one of Ireland's great bands," while tastemaker website Very Short List called Flock an "early front-runner for best record of 2008" and the New York Daily News predicted that Bell X1 is "ready to explode worldwide." The group also performed on The Late Show with David Letterman, Late Night with Conan O'Brien and The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson.

The new album was recorded in such diverse locales as a drafty 400-year-old Irish castle, in a disused factory and in Dominic Phillips' garage studio. Noonan asserts, "We allowed ourselves to be a little looser in terms of emphasizing feel over precision. We stumbled upon some special moments that way, like the endings of 'How Your Heart is Wired' and 'Amelia.' It's very satisfying when you leave the tape rolling and capture something that clicks, something that you'd never be able to do again."

While the past few years have seen Bell X1 making major artistic and career strides, the group has been honing its sound since its formation in 1999, and its members have been making music together since the early '90s. Having met at school in Ireland's North County Kildare, Noonan, Geraghty and Phillips first recorded as members of Juniper, whose lead singer was Damien Rice. After Rice departed to launch his solo career, Noonan, Geraghty, Phillips and Crosby regrouped and rechristened themselves Bell X1, borrowing the name of the first plane to break the sound barrier. (Blue Lights on the Runway is the first project the band has undertaken since the amicable departure of co-founding member Brian Crosby, who exited in October 2008 to concentrate on his interest in film-soundtrack composition and production)

Bell X1 debuted with 2000's Neither Am I, produced by Crowded House member Nick Seymour. That disc became a modest cult hit in Ireland, where the band's tireless touring efforts won it a reputation as a powerful live act. The sophomore effort Music in Mouth followed in 2003, and established Bell X1 as both a major attraction and a critical favorite in its homeland, while winning the group increasing popularity in Europe.

Upon its release in late 2005, Flock (produced by studio vet Roger Bechirian, of Elvis Costello/Squeeze/Undertones fame) became a smash, establishing Bell X1 as one of Ireland's best-selling recording acts and most popular live bands. After receiving its belated U.S. release in 2008, Flock won Bell X1 a substantial audience in America, where the band toured no less than four times, and managed to survive unscathed after

their tour bus caught fire in Medford, Massachusetts. The group's stateside profile was further enhanced when its songs were featured in such popular TV shows as *The O.C.*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *One Tree Hill*.

The success of Flock led to Bell X1 setting up its own label, BellyUp Records, giving the band complete control over its musical output. The new imprint's initial release was the hugely successful live CD/DVD package *Tour De Flock*, which debuted at Number Four on the Irish charts, the highest-ever debut for a self-released title.

*Blue Lights on the Runway* showcases the remarkable creative chemistry that Bell X1 has nurtured over the course of its eventful existence. According to Noonan, "Spending so much time making music together, we've developed an intuition, and when we're writing we can communicate musically, without having to stop to explain where we're going."

Indeed, *Blue Lights on the Runway* makes it clear that Bell X1 is just getting started. "The vibe we seem to be getting from everybody right now is 'Go forth and conquer,'" Noonan states. "And that's precisely what we intend to do."