

Call it pure ecstasy and elation in audio form.

The self-titled debut LP from collaborative R&B collective Sunshine Makers doesn't so much emanate from the speakers as it does seep and swirl out, winding, wrapping, and enveloping the listener in a warm, mesmeric aural embrace.

"This project basically began when my last one ended," shares Sunshine Makers captain Brent Jackson, looking back to 2017 when his long-running, much-loved Canadian indie rock outfit The Junction formally folded and sent its members down a different tine of the metaphorical fork in their musical road.

"Whereas The Junction was more insular in terms of songwriting and arrangement, Sunshine Makers lets me be collaborative, and bring other people into the fold to expand my musical reach and explore some entirely new territory," he elaborates.

Jackson remains the core creative force behind Sunshine Makers, composing, compiling, and collating each entry in the band's burgeoning catalogue; however, this time around, he's inviting each individual contributor to leave their unique artistic fingerprint intact – and indeed, there are many.

Co-produced by Jackson and accomplished musical polymath Ben Fox, Sunshine Makers' S/T seamlessly weaves threads of funk, soul, alt-rock, reggae, rap, and pure, unapologetic pop through its R&B framework, resulting in a universal tapestry of tastes, eras, and textures.

Alongside Jackson and Fox, keyboardist Jemuel Roberts (aka J3M) and saxophonist Dennis Passley (Arkells, Pocket Dwellers) handle most of the instrumentation. And then there's the featured guestlist that's as long as it is diverse.

There are contributions from members of international headliners like Tame Impala, BADBADNOTGOOD, and Yeasayer; acclaimed emcees including Shad, Odario, Nigel Williams, pHoenix Pagliacci, and Tea Fannie; the velvet-smooth voices of Carleigh Aikins, Tafari Anthony, and Kamilah Apong; and cred-oozing innovators like Aquakultre, Blunt Chunks, and Sinzere. And that's – literally – just naming a few...

Ultimately, the album is seven years in the making – and it sounds that way in the best light possible, built on a foundation of tight musical fusion and foils. It's communal but calculated, balancing electric and organic instrumentation. It boasts warm, enwrapping arrangements coated in a cool, crisp production – thanks largely to a pristine mix by Gus van Go (Metric, Arkells) and mastering by Dan Weston (Flo Rida, B.o.B.).

The results are ripe with undiluted artistic passion, and while Jackson has been resonating on that joyful and jubilant wavelength in recent years, he admits that, in the beginning, Sunshine Makers was more aspirational than actual.

“Addiction is lonely, and I honestly thought my light had gone out,” he reflects on his personal struggles amidst the tumultuous first half of the band’s incubation phase. “I was writing songs that represented the place that I wanted to be, more so than the one where I found myself. I went away to rehab and since then have lived a sober life. I honestly feel we must go through the pain of fundamental change to learn from it, and now, I’m in a place that’s a lot closer to the essence and significance of Sunshine Makers.”

Tracks like “Got to Be Good” and “Spin Around the World” put forward an effortless energy sure to make heads bob and hips sway, whereas the more pensive “Fly Away” and “No Sympathy” are infused with a sombre-but-stirring raw emotion. Then there’s the unbridled bliss of “Lovers to the Moon” and “Baby It’s Yours,” the latter of which serves as a sincere ode to fatherhood.

And while collaboration is very much at the core of Sunshine Makers, that communal vibe extends a tier further with Lovetown Records, the imprint through which the S/T effort – not to mention other projects by artists based in the creative capital of London, Ontario – will see daylight.

“I just can’t wait for people to hear this album, and I hope it’s as uplifting and inspiring to them as it is to me,” Jackson says in closing.

He admittedly didn’t mean for the Sunshine Makers moniker to be so on the nose (it’s actually a nod to the pioneering purveyors of LSD in the ‘60s and ‘70s), but ultimately, creating this record with its wide cast of contributors became a means of manufacturing – and then embracing – the sheer joy it so welcomingly conveys.