**Anxious - *Bambi* - bio**

Somewhere in the blur of endless touring, Anxious vocalist Grady Allen was sitting in a hotel room and stumbled upon a name typed into a long-forgotten memo on his phone: Bambi. “We should have named the band Bambi,” he recalls admitting to his bandmates. The tenor of the conversation is likely familiar to anyone of a certain age, when you reflect on choices that a younger version of yourself made and reckon with how things could be different if you’d chosen a different path. Bambistuck with the band after that night and eventually it evolved from a “what-if” into the name of Anxious’ second full-length album.

*Bambi* is a record of remarkable growth, depth, ambition, and energy. It takes all the unsolvable and unavoidable problems of exiting adolescence and makes them resonate in urgent and authentic new ways. The album has deep roots in the storied lineage of Northeast tri-state hardcore and emo, but it also fully embraces the widescreen alternative rock songwriting at which Anxious have previously only hinted. It’s a statement of purpose, the kind of album that comes from a band reconciling where they’ve been with where they want to go. *Bambi* is the sound of Anxious putting everything on the line–and coming out on the other side better than ever.

In 2022, Anxious (Allen, guitarist/co-vocalist Dante Melucci, drummer Jonny Camner, bassist Sam Allen, and guitarist Tommy Harte) released their debut album, *Little Green House*, winning over fans and critics alike, and kicking off what would become two entire years of touring. It’s a tale as old as time: a young band forms with modest ambitions, spends several years organically developing their sound and writing their first record, then releases that album to acclaim and new opportunities, and the band finds their wildest dreams materializing alongside an incredibly unstable new life on the road. Guided by the spirits of a thousand acts that burned themselves out on the same grueling cross-country support tours, the band gamely takes on the challenge. Soon there are interests outside of their own dictating what they need to do in order to keep this coveted momentum going. The goalposts move, the novelty wears off, the missteps become less cute–oh and they need to cut two songs from the set tonight because the venue has a hard curfew to accommodate the dance night starting after the show. Don’t let any of this get in the way of writing a follow-up album, though.

As thoughts of LP2 loomed, Allen began to have questions about what being in a band for the long haul really looks like. “I started exploring what it would look like to finish college,” he explains. “I looked at the whole thing through this very binary lens: I could either do the band or go back to school. So when I unveiled everything to the guys I think everyone perceived it as ‘Well, Grady is just leaving.’ I think I probably thought about it that way, too. It caused this massive rift between me and everyone else. I think there was very much a sense of ‘Huh, the band may break up or maybe Grady just won’t be in the band anymore.’” A round of touring in Asia and the States proved surprisingly reinvigorating, and school began to seem like something that could coexist in balance with the band–but Allen’s faith needed repairing along with his relationship to his bandmates. Meanwhile, both he and Melucci were also struggling with the toll constant touring had taken on their respective romantic partnerships back home. To say this loaded atmosphere wasn’t conducive to creativity might be an understatement, but in the midst of all the turmoil, *Bambi* was created.

Inspired by “big swing” records like Blink-182’s self-titled or Jimmy Eat World’s *Clarity*, Anxious set out to redefine the band without losing sight of what made them work in the first place. “The idea that Bambi should have been the band name sort of turned into this sentiment that got carried onto the LP,” says Allen. “Bambi is the band we could have been, that I want us to be–and I think the record is that.” The songs formed in fits and starts, with the bulk of the work taking place in the band’s homebase of Fairfield County, Connecticut, during a rare four-month break. “The whole album stayed a mystery to me for so long because there were so many wrong ways to do it,” says Melucci when considering the classic trope of a band attempting to avoid the sophomore slump. The members aimed to reconnect creatively in the same basement where they wrote *Little Green House* years before, but things didn’t truly take shape until they entered Barber Shop Studios with producer/engineer Brett Romnes (Oso Oso, The Movielife, Front Bottoms). “He just did a fantastic job challenging us and pushing our ideas into a whole new echelon,” Allen recalls.

This level up is immediately apparent on the opening track “Never Said.” Beginning with a shimmering guitar line, different sonic elements are added one by one until the track explodes into the blend of melody and aggression at which Anxious excels. The heightened dynamics are matched by Allen’s voice, which pivots from warmth to grit on a dime as he sings about the disappointing aspects of devoting yourself to a subculture, only to find out that it’s full of the same alienating flaws of the mainstream. “As our bubble of music continues to expand and become more popular there seems to be this pushback from some people,” he explains. “The message they perpetuate is ‘there’s a lot of bullsh-t right now that’s not *the real thing*.’ It just seems like a lazy, purposely inflammatory argument with no real substance. If the only way you can define something you’ve made is by defining what it’s *not*, it sounds like it doesn’t have a ton of identity.”

*Bambi* makes it clear that Anxious doesn't suffer from that issue. Their span of influences is wide, drawing on everything from The Smashing Pumpkins, to The Beach Boys, to Animal Collective, but these sounds are then filtered through a strong sense of what makes a good Anxious song. Lead single “Counting Sheep” perfectly encapsulates this creative ambition through dreamy atmosphere and blissful falsetto vocals colliding into walls of jagged guitars and Camner’s powerhouse drumming. Ping-ponging between subdued passages and giant riffs, the structure compliments the song’s lyrical themes of sleeping in as a way to avoid problems for another few moments. It’s all rounded out by one of the most anthemic choruses Anxious have ever penned, and a mind-bending guitar solo that would make James Iha proud.

Elsewhere tracks like “Head & Spine,” “Sunder,” or “Tell Me Why” showcase the scope of Anxious’ evolution, tapping crunchy ‘90s rock guitarwork, layered ‘60s-esque harmonies, and Romnes’ crisp, modern production to create a sound that’s somewhere between Third Eye Blind’s self-titled and Saves The Day’s *Stay What You Are.* All while Allen and Melucci go on an unvarnished exploration of the frustrations of growing up and growing apart from the things that used to ground you. “The lyrics are really honest and direct,” Harte notes of his two co-writing bandmates. “For Dante and Grady, I think that it takes a lot of bravery to be able to be that vulnerable in a setting where everyone is on the other side of the control room. And also with the dual vocalist nature of the band, they’re sharing words with someone else and trusting someone else with that emotion. I think some of the most beautiful moments on the record are where their voices contrast.” Those moments particularly stand out on songs like “Audrey Go Again” or “Next Big Star,” where the band delve into acoustic guitars and intricate arrangements, highlighting their ability to provide big hooks and emotional payoffs without relying on volume alone.

There’s a distinct shift from being a gang of kids doing regional runs at VFWs to an established band touring worldwide. Anxious are treading a path they started on as high schoolers, and are now barreling through quarter-life crises at 55mph (*Double Nickels on the Dime*, but also the fastest speed to safely operate a 15-passenger van and trailer). While this familiar trajectory has defeated many bands, *Bambi* proves that Anxious won’t be one of them. The album comes to a close with “I’ll Be Around,” a stomping mid-tempo rock song that builds to a massive climax of swooning vocals and noisy guitars. While much of *Bambi* is imbued with disillusionment, “I’ll Be Around” zeros in on the bonds that make all the growing pains worthwhile. “I wrote it about the enduring nature of my friendship with Dante,” Allen says. “Him and I have been friends for over ten years now and although we’ve grown in different directions, we’ve been able to maintain this synergy and love. It feels like the right note to close the record on: hopeful, loving, forgiving–looking forward.”