

After being spellbound by Agent Cleave onstage in 2015's *Show Stopper*, producer and composer Richard Andrew (Underground Lovers, Black Cab) set about writing a suite of songs for Cleave to add his unique and compelling vocals. Together as He Cries Diamonds, Cleave howls stories of sweet regret while Andrew's cinematic score incites sighs of lust and sorrow with its gritty *Roadhouse* sensuality.

The pair's collaboration started by chance, Andrew says: "Across a crowded room I saw Cleave performing, in a full length electric blue satin dress and hat, doing an incredible spoken word piece, and I knew I had to work with him." He'd been trying to put together an act with a more diverse line up for some time, one that had both musicality and performance. "A kind of, Noir Rock," Richard explains.

Distance got in the way more than once, with Cleave booked as Peaches' (CAN) dancer for her European and North American tours, but they used this time to write. "Richard composed treatments for the songs," says Cleave, "Then he'd send them to me and I'd be somewhere like Atlanta where I'd come up with the melody and lyrics. For me this is a different conversation. My background is in cabaret, but with the band, it's tapping into a more melancholy side," a more melancholy side, but with that same raw edge that Cleave is known for.

While Cleave was overseas, Richard Andrew was also putting the band together back in Melbourne, getting Andy Pap on bass, and Andrew Hier on drums. In late 2016 everything started slotting into place, with He Cries Diamonds performing two shows (Labour in Vain, Fitzroy and Projekt 3488, Warburton), and recording an album, due to be released in 2017 by Pharmacy Records, all in the space of three months. The album reflects the intersecting lines between safety and danger, and will be front and centre as they warm up for its release, with gigs throughout Melbourne in the coming months.

With splashes of the Velvet Underground, PJ Harvey and Tennessee Williams influencing their music and aesthetic, He Cries Diamonds perform songs of modern sadness that echo a timeless melancholy. "It reminds me of Joy Division, in a way, how the timing worked so perfectly," says Andrew. He Cries Diamonds are a group of distinctive personalities, in this particular time and place, bringing Melbourne a record that is visually, sonically, the real thing.