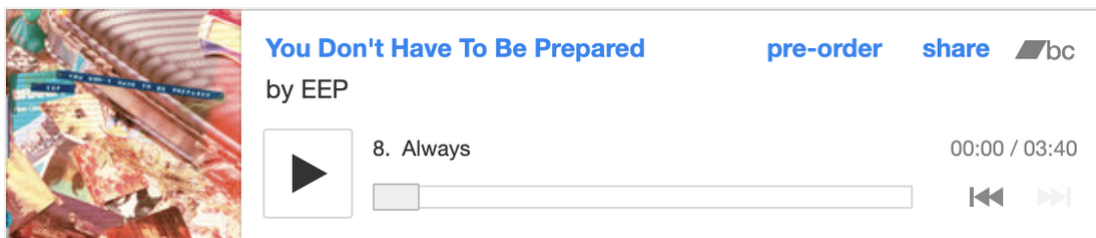




***You Don't Have To Be Prepared* is an ode to doing what feels right. It's a concept album that collectively quiets the overactive mind and amplifies the gut, nourishing the playful nature of why we create things, why we come together, why we make 'the jump'. - EEP on YDHTBP**



***RIYL* Lavender Diamond, Soccer Mommy, Jay Som, Mazzy Star, Mojave 3, Throwing Muses**

PRAISE FOR EEP:

"Always" flows in a radiant dreampop" - Bandas Desconocidas

"This El Paso band's debut album is a solid set of shoegazer psych-rock ranging from driving, fuzz-encrusted rockers to atmospheric dream-pop." -KEXP

"[P]erceptive lyrics, heartfelt emotions, and deftly intricate and melodic sonic exploration." -The Big Takeover

"A work of unparalleled beauty full of special lyrical moments, sonic excellence and structured to perfection." -DKFM

"Layers of guitars, shifting drum beats, bass flourishes, and walls of vox creating a dense moving fog like a storm picking up speed." - American Pancake

It's the late 70s, or perhaps the early 80s, and a middle-aged woman in Clay Center, Kansas—possibly named Anne—is leaving an audio message for her sweetheart in El Paso, Texas. She's exiting her old life and entering a new one, jumping across the country and into her next chapter. A second chance at love, and an optimism that's palpable through the recording; a recording that found its way to a Sunland Park, New Mexico studio housed by El Paso-based three-piece band EEP.

To look for a sign that we're heading in the right direction starts with curiosity. Things happen for a reason, but to understand that reason in the moment, we have to open ourselves up to the path beyond the other door opening. For EEP, this curiosity led them to an old dictaphone, reel-to-reel tape recorder inside a 1979 Hammond Cougar organ that had been sitting in plain sight for years. Faced with a new line-up, and no new plan of what to do for their new album, the recording offered the sign they were searching for. They set out to tell Anne's story. "This physical artifact that had been part of our studio for so long allowed us to not just find their conclusion but also a conclusion for our narrative in that space; the space where we came together and became a band," bassist Sebastian Estrada explains.

You Don't Have To Be Prepared is an ode to doing what feels right. It's a concept album that collectively quiets the overactive mind and amplifies the gut, nourishing the playful nature of why we create things, why we come together, why we make 'the jump'. For members Rosie Varela (vocals, guitar, percussion), Ross Ingram (vocals, guitar, drums), and Estrada, (vocals, bass, drums), the open-endedness of Anne's recording mirrored the open-endedness of their creative collaboration. Two members had recently left the band, including their drummer, and EEP were unsure of their next steps. "How would we regroup?," asked Varela. "Are we still going to be able to do this?"

What they thought would be a restrictive process turned into a flourishing one. No drummer meant they all pitched in on percussion, and the three-piece quickly began stretching the skills they'd been building for years. "It definitely changed our approach in a way that I think was very positive as far as making it a more creative record than it would've been," Ingram explains. "We're always trying to find new sounds, and we were able to do that by digging into our individual abilities." *You Don't Have To Be Prepared* showcases snippets of the layered, textural arrangements witnessed in their first two LPs, *Death Of A Very Good Machine* (2020) and *Winter Skin* (2021), but without the all-encompassing

walls of guitar or reverb. *You Don't Have To Be Prepared* is not an enclosure but rather a maze that encourages experimentation, quiet corners, lingering notes and unexpected revelations.

The band treated the studio like a fourth member, and didn't worry about making something that could be replicated perfectly on stage. Snippets of everyday life—doing the dishes, birds in the backyard, vignettes from past relationships—are scattered throughout and almost all of the songs were brought in as works-in-progress; Varela, Ingram and Estrada composed them on the spot. Opener “Ghost” started with two lines Ingram had been trying to place for the better part of a decade: “*You were a ghost/I dragged from town to town.*” Once he brought it in, the band recognized this ghost as doubt or depression or perhaps, a previous relationship that’s holding you back from meeting this next person. The song then morphed into a kaleidoscopic composition, featuring crisp, clean guitar, counterpoint harmonies and looped synth demos. It points to the sonic landscape of the album, and sees EEP incorporate dream pop and experimental rock into their shoegaze foundation.

The immensely layered “Here’s What I Want You To Forget” wasn’t so quick to come together, with the band including three different drum sets in the final mix. The percussive intensity feels like a memory refusing to relocate, meshing with the urge to push it away. “Always” offers a catharsis and a removal of doubt. Anne has arrived in El Paso, and the song beautifully constructs her new life with peppy instrumental buoyancy. The closer title track was actually created before the concept came into focus, but seamlessly tied together with the theme and the band’s current state of mind: a lack of intention and an openness to possibility. The connection to Anne was perhaps that nudge from the universe.

The artwork for *You Don't Have To Be Prepared* is a collage of found vintage photos and pressed flowers collected from a local antique store. Strangers, tucked away in a box, probably forgotten, now on the cover of an album about taking a chance, and staying open to whatever’s next. This artwork is a testament to EEP’s ability to revive and renew, and to spotlight the unpredictable. Stress and anxiety fills up so much of our daily lives and this constant pressure to be ‘ready for anything’ can be seen on the tired faces of anyone’s gaze we might meet. “You don’t have to be prepared” became a mantra for EEP, and now it can be for others. “Live your life, take your risks, take your chances, and hope for the best,” Varela says. “Things are happening for you and even when they don’t work out, something else will come along.” For EEP, Anne’s recording came along just when they needed it.

-Sammy Maine



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