Mass Gothic

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After nearly ten years as the creative force behind much-loved New York rock outfit Hooray For Earth, Noel Heroux had lost his way. “I was constantly cutting corners and phoning everything in,” he says. “I was super depressed. I was creatively frustrated. I was emotionally unavailable to the people I really really wanted to be there for—and no matter how much I cared, I just couldn’t change. But when I realized that I needed to end the band and just try again, my head cleared and the clouds parted. I’d been derailed somehow,” he adds. “So I allowed myself to return to the beginning.”

This year marks the release of *Mass Gothic,* the Massachusetts-bred, New York-based singer/songwriter’s self-titled Sub Pop debut. Written and recorded at home over four months during the winter of 2014-2015, it’s a stunning reminder of not just Heroux’s own remarkable talents as singer and songwriter, but how unbridled creativity can both sound and feel as well: Before Hooray For Earth had quickly become a fully-functioning band, it began as a solo project. No pressure or compromises—just Heroux, a four-track, and an irrepressible urge to “jot down all of the noise and music floating around in my head” and make it available to other people. “All I wanted to do was whatever I do when I’m alone and I’m unconcerned with what anyone else wants or expects,” he says. “I did my best to let go, and what came out was pure, uncut. It reminded me of the first few times I made music, when I was a young kid. I didn’t set any rules and I had zero expectations.”

The result is an expansive, often exhilarating set of guitar-driven pop that required very little editing when it was done. Additional mixing was provided by Chris Coady (Beach House, TV on the Radio) with mastering done by Greg Calbi (Father John Misty, Tame Impala) at Sterling Sound. From the iridescent doo-wop of “Every Night You’ve Got To Save Me” to the skyward crescendo of “Mind Is Probably” to the falsetto-streaked clatter of “Want To, Bad,” it’s a radiant retelling of Heroux’s starting over, with “Nice Night" as its cathartic, electrifying centerpiece. “A lot of these songs are more or less a really dramatic, loud apology/thank you note,” he says, referencing his partner, collaborator, and tour mate, Jessica. “It didn’t matter where any of the sounds came from. I just cared that it sounded big and heavy, and that it was moving when it was done. It’s a clean slate entirely—and I’m so relieved.”