

= Let the Blind Lead Those Who Can See but Cannot Feel =

Let the Blind Lead Those Who Can See but Cannot Feel is the first studio album by Atlas Sound , the solo project of Deerhunter lead vocalist Bradford Cox . The album was released in North America by Kranky Records on February 19 , 2008 and in Europe by 4AD on May 5 , 2008 . The tracks of Let the Blind Lead were constructed with computer @-@ generated and recorded instruments in music software Ableton Live . Described as being stream @-@ of @-@ consciousness in nature by Cox , each song was created over the span of several hours ; in addition , the music and lyrics were written and sung on the spot . For its release , the tracks were arranged in the order in which they were recorded ; Cox described the album as a whole as having a " dynamic arc " to it . The North American cover art is a modified photograph of a painting of a doctor treating a sick boy . The face of the child is obscured by a camera flash , although Cox feels that this gives the picture a " romantic " element .

The lyrics of Let the Blind Lead are autobiographical in nature , reflecting life experiences of Cox . These include abuses he received as a child , past drug addictions , and the time he spent hospitalized as a teenager due to his genetic disorder Marfan syndrome . Several songs concern his best friend Lockett Pundt , the guitarist for Deerhunter , whom the album is dedicated to . " Winter Vacation " is a reflection on the first time the two met , while in " Ativan " , Cox examines his relationship with Pundt . Let the Blind Lead was generally well @-@ received by critics ; some praised Cox 's emotional lyrics , while others criticized his music for lacking substance . The record charted at number 32 on Billboard magazine 's Top Heatseekers chart for one week .

= = Production = =

The music of Atlas Sound utilizes computer @-@ based MIDI instruments , created and recorded in musical software Ableton Live ; the program allows Cox " to turn pretty much any sound into a MIDI @-@ controllable keyboard " , according to him . Effects that were not already built into the program were seldom used . Brian Foote of the band Nudge assisted Cox in the production of Let the Blind Lead , by showing him the basics of the software , and aiding in the selection of equipment that would be used on the record . Cox described the process of recording the album as being stream @-@ of @-@ consciousness : " with Atlas Sound , the songs are being written as they 're recorded . " In addition , all of the lyrics on the album were created as they were being recorded on the first take .

The album 's title is derived from a dream Cox had in which he saw a group of protesters , one of whom was holding up a sign reading " Let the blind lead those who can see but cannot feel " . Upon waking , Cox wrote down the phrase on a notebook beside his bed . He described the concept to Out magazine as being " like you are able to see , but you might not know the right direction to go in . But somebody who can ? t see might ? just by instinct ? lead you that way . " The arrangement of the tracks on Let the Blind Lead is chronological , presented in the order in which they were recorded .

= = = Artwork = = =

The North American album cover artwork originates from a medical journal Cox discovered in a thrift store . A painting in the journal depicts a doctor treating an ill boy , " while his mom looks on , concerned " , as described by Cox . In photographing the painting , the face of the boy was obscured by the flash of the camera . While it " kind of took away from the photo " according to him , the picture became " somehow ? romantic , the idea that there was so much emotion in the face that it got whited out . " Cox described the boy as being " the saddest boy ? lovesick and emaciated " , adding , " I related to that boy so much that I literally , in the thrift store , almost started crying . " The European album artwork was created by v23 , a group that designs cover art for label 4AD .

= = Style = =

## == Music ==

Let the Blind Lead has been characterized as ambient , psychedelic , and pop music , similar in style to Cox 's previous work with Deerhunter , such as the band 's 2007 album Cryptograms . Cox is drawn to ambient music due to its ambiguous , repetitive , and " emotive " nature . He considers himself inspired in part by the style and " sonic picture " of girl groups and doo @-@ wop music . Instruments heard on the record include the guitar , drums , glockenspiel , mbira , and Ghanaian bells . Cox also considers his voice an instrument of its own . While moving toward using less layering effects on the vocal tracks in his music , because he does not consider himself a songwriter , Cox prefers to use such effects to make his voice more instrumental and ambiguous in nature . He has said he is " always more interested in the parts that are like vocalists , wordless vocals : the harmonizing , the oohs when the vocals become like an instrument . "

To create tracks on Let the Blind Lead , Cox continually adds elements to a song until he " feel [ s ] like it 's getting crowded ? When it sounds done , it 's done . And if it seems like it 's missing something , I 'll go back and add something . " Most of his music is the product of several hours ' work , rather than that of a few days . To Pitchfork Media Cox said that , with each song , " The genesis is usually a beat . " Cox considers the music of Let the Blind Lead to have a " dynamic arc " : the first half of the record contains " more accessible songs . I was very depressed in the middle , and it created this kind of black hole of misery . Then I tried to bring it up again at the end . " Cox intended for his music to be " therapeutic " , for both himself and his audience . In addition , he wanted the album to have a healing element , and be something " somebody could listen to all the way through and feel like they went through a bad period of time and came out of it . " Pauline Oliveros , a composer who runs an organization that studies music therapy , was described by Cox as having " a big influence " on him and his ideas of therapeutic music . He considers music " the only art form I know of that has such an immediate effect on the human psyche " , and found the time he first met and talked with Oliveros as being " like meeting a hero of mine . "

The album 's opening track , " A Ghost Story " , contains a sample of a young boy telling a ghost story , obtained by Cox from an internet audio archive of free music samples . Cox found the sample " moving " , and used it to create an intro that would set the tone for the rest of the album . Said Cox , " I wanted to create a haunted record , you know ? Kind of filled with ghosts . I thought it just set up the album nicely . " He summarized the song as consisting of " basically just a cassette and effected hammer dulcimers . " The sounds of " Small Horror " were intended to represent " banging depression . " Cox described the song as being " the most depressing song " on Let the Blind Lead , and as being " concrete " musically . Instrumental track " Ready Set Glow " is supposed to " create the impression of passing out and falling back into a bed of strobe lights . " Another instrumental song , " After Class " , is a " sonic rearrangement " of a track produced by Deerhunter for the 2008 compilation album Living Bridge . The self @-@ titled final song of Let the Blind Lead , another instrumental track , was intended to bring the album full circle , having it start and end on an " ambient note " . Lockett Pundt , a recurring focus of the album 's lyrics , created a guitar loop which was the basis for the song " Cold as Ice " .

## == Lyrics ==

While Cox was working with Deerhunter to produce Cryptograms , it was considered Kranky Records policy to not print the lyrics of an album in its liner notes . This was a rule enforced by label owner Joel Leoschke , who believed the practice " demystifi [ ed ] the experience of a rock record . " Despite largely agreeing with this sentiment , Cox chose to print the lyrics of Let the Blind Lead , in part because he wanted to " see what they looked like , " having ad @-@ libbed the words of every song on their first take . In an interview with Pitchfork Media , Cox described the lyrical origins of each song on Let the Blind Lead ; they are largely autobiographical in nature , reflecting life experiences of his . The song " Recent Bedroom " conveys an experience Cox had when his aunt

died : " She was in her bedroom , and everybody knew she was about to pass away , and she went out , she faded out , and everybody just started crying . " Although he was " overwhelmed " by her death , it did not bring him to tears like the rest of his family . This event is expressed in the song by the lines " I walked outside , I could not cry / I don ' t know , I don ' t know why " . Cox ' s inability to cry stemmed from his having been " very involved in drugs " at the time , which he believes eliminated his " childhood instinct ? to cry . " The song attempts to communicate an emotional vacancy and sense of detachment characterized by " moving from childhood to adolescence " .

" River Card " is based on a Puerto Rican short story entitled " There ' s a Little Coloured Boy at the Bottom of the River " . The story tells of a boy who falls in love with his reflection in a river , believing it is another person , similar to the Greek myth of Narcissus . Cox attempted to capture " this childhood homoerotic energy ? I remember experiencing and relating to . " In the conclusion of the story , the boy jumps into the water and drowns , thus making " River Card " " a song about a dead child . " The lyrical contents of " Quarantined " were inspired by a Russian article Cox read about children born with AIDS , confined in hospitals due to the " various lifestyles and mistakes " of their parents . Cox , who has a genetic condition known as Marfan syndrome , related the article to his own experiences with children ' s hospitals . Having had many chest and back surgeries when he was sixteen , he " got real used to children ' s hospitals " , finding them " kind of haunted , weird places . " " On Guard " is described as " a sad song " , the lyrics of which illustrate having to age and dealing with the " newfound anxiety " that comes with meeting new people . Cox explains that this anxiety stems from lacking " the energy to represent yourself to people . You ' re always on guard . "

The lyrical content of " Cold as Ice " is based on a relationship Cox had with a girl named Alice . Having fallen in love with her in the fifth grade , he proposed to marry her on the school ' s playground . Alice rejected Cox , calling the ring he had given her " a cheap piece of crap . " Years later , Cox worked with Alice at a Subway restaurant . Occasionally , " for no reason " , she would ask him to watch her change into her uniform in the restaurant ' s refrigerator , which he described as having been as " cold as ice " . Cox suspects that " she was trying to torture me or something . " The song " Bite Marks " is about " sadomasochism and boy prostitution . " In the song , Cox references an experience he had when he was kissing a man who bit him " really , really hard " on his shoulder , leaving bite marks " for like two weeks . " This experience , along with other abuses he received as a child , formed the lyrical basis of the song .

A recurring source of lyrical subject matter in *Let the Blind Lead* is Cox ' s best friend , Deerhunter guitarist Lockett Pundt , whom the album is dedicated to . " Winter Vacation " concerns the first time the two met . Seeing him at a bus stop while vacationing in Savannah , Georgia , Cox was " attracted to him , but not in some kind of like , just physical way . " Seeing " his melancholy , his sitting alone , staring at the ground " , he " fell in love " with him . Cox and his family later drove to a beach ; " Winter Vacation " relates to Cox ' s memory of the beach , being " infected with that new love " found after meeting Pundt . The words of " Scraping Past " are about " moving on ? And wondering if somebody is going to come with you or ? stay behind . " This uncertainty is characterized by several lines Cox considers " pop song clichés " , referencing " rain that comes and goes . " In the song , Cox asks Pundt , " Are you going to come with me , or are you staying here ? " In " Ativan " Cox examines his addiction to the drug of the same name , as well as his relationship with Pundt . " It talks a lot about how things have changed between me and Lockett ' s relationship and how he ' s met a girl and ? our friendship is never gonna change , but it ' s difficult sometimes . " Cox asserts that he would " rather just take whatever drugs it takes to go to sleep and sleep through it ? I ' m not prepared to face it yet . "

= = Reception = =

On Metacritic , *Let the Blind Lead* Those Who Can See but Cannot Feel has received an average critic score of 81 out of 100 , based on 23 reviews , indicating " Universal Acclaim " . Upon release , the album received Pitchfork Media ' s " Best New Music " accolade , and was later placed 26th on the publication ' s 50 Best Albums of 2008 . For one week , the album peaked at number 32 on

Billboard magazine 's Top Heatseekers chart .

Marc Hogan of Pitchfork Media praised the album in his review , writing that it " works best as a swirling , disorienting whole , " and " those drawn to his lovesick , evolving audio presence have ? an entire world to explore . " Dominic Umile of PopMatters found the album 's " lovesickness and confessions " to be " as tenderly delivered as its hazy atmospherics are " , and , in their " bare authenticity ? far more compelling in repeat indulgences than Deerhunter ? s explorations . " Tiny Mix Tapes rewarded the album 4 / 5 stars , saying that , while each song has a " distinctive quality " allowing it to stand on its own , by backing out to view the album as a whole , the " individual elements unify ? mak [ ing ] a greater holistic product . "

Wilson McBee of Slant Magazine was more negative towards the album , writing that " Let the Blind Lead presents an intriguing mixture of sounds , but rarely does Cox whip them into anything very exciting . " In his review , he likened the album to a " tempered " version of Deerhunter 's Cryptograms . Under the Radar magazine wrote that many of the tracks of Let the Blind Lead " never materialize into anything more substantial than vapor . " Sean O 'Neal of The Onion 's A.V. Club said that , considering the number of free songs Cox has released on his blog , a full @-@ length album " seems almost beside the point . " He wrote that the record 's songs suggest the work of " a bedroom @-@ pop auteur who doesn 't know when to quit tweaking " . Allmusic writer Marisa Brown found that , with Let the Blind Lead , " as with Deerhunter , Cox has the tendency to try too hard to be profound ( take the title -- or the title track -- for example ) , wanting so badly to say something important that he sounds trite and forced , and untrustworthy . " Jonathen Cohen wrote in his review for Magnet that " Cox ? s narratives make little sense " , noting " much of the time , he ? s not even singing so much as wailing wordlessly " .

In an interview with John Norris of MTV News , Cox said of the reception to Let the Blind Lead : " The response to this Atlas Sound record ? the general response was very , very positive , but very , very much rooted in the concept that this is an emotional album . This is an album that has a lot of feeling behind it , and it 's very naked ? That might in fact be [ the case ] , but the reason it is that way is because it was done stream @-@ of @-@ consciously . [ sic ] [ ? ] I 'm not calculated . I don 't mind sentimentality , as long as it 's not calculated . "

= = Track listing = =

All songs were written by Bradford Cox .

" A Ghost Story " ? 2 : 44

" Recent Bedroom " ? 3 : 46

" River Card " ? 3 : 20

" Quarantined " ? 4 : 20

" On Guard " ? 3 : 40

" Winter Vacation " ? 4 : 00

" Cold As Ice " ? 3 : 33

" Scraping Past " ? 4 : 30

" Small Horror " ? 2 : 54

" Ready , Set , Glow " ? 2 : 58

" Bite Marks " ? 4 : 18

" After Class " ? 3 : 29

" Ativan " ? 2 : 51

" Let the Blind Lead Those Who Can See but Cannot Feel " ? 3 : 45

= = Bonus disc = =

Included with the European release by 4AD . This collection of tracks was also released digitally by Kranky as Another Bedroom EP .

" Another Bedroom " ? 5 : 41

" It Rained " ? 3 : 05

" Stained Glass Swan " ? 2 : 58

" The Abandoned Closet " ? 2 : 16

" Spring Break " ? 4 : 57

" ABC Glasgow " ? 5 : 02

= = Personnel = =

Bradford Cox ? engineering , mixing

Brian Foote ? mixing

Craig S. McCaffrey ? layout assistance

Bob Weston ? mastering

= = Release history = =