

## Soft Power announce new album 'Easy Listening'



Artwork by Loretta Wilde

Soft Power was formed in mid 2016 by Australian guitarist and composer Matthew Roche who began writing songs to pay homage to the jazz traditions of yesteryear whilst exploring themes of personal vulnerability and self-growth inspired by a 7 day silent meditation retreat. After a sold out debut album launch earlier last year with 'A Breath Is Like a Swinging Door' and joined by new band mates Oscar Neyland and Chris Cameron (from the Rookies, The Willie Wagtails, Acolyte respectively) the Melbourne based trio are a regular fixture on the jazz and improvised music scene and return to launch their second LP 'Easy Listening'.

Undoubtedly jazz-tinged but also (more importantly) - vulnerable, genderless, dorky & kitsch, unshowy and meditative. 'Easy Listening' was recorded and mixed by Myles Mumford at Rolling Stock Recording Rooms and mastered by Adam Dempsey at Jack The Bear's Deluxe Mastering. Recorded live in just one day, the LP

captures the band at their most playful and relaxed: cutting a broad path through slow moving songs and harmonic landscapes that at times verge on post-rock, pop and cinematic ambient music.

Featuring the single 'Getting Out of the Way of Yourself' and 'It's Cool To Be Kind - Soft Power's new LP positions themselves as a group that is comfortable on the precipice of jazz and improvisation, balancing technical finesse with intimate and emotionally charged musical statements.



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Track listing:

1. Best Foot Forward (8:24)
2. Getting Out of the Way of Yourself (5:39)
3. Go Slow (4:55)
4. It's Cool To Be Kind (6:56)
5. Mind is a Pyre (8:05)
6. Not Yet (8:37)
7. The Path of Glaciers (6:33)

PHOTOS:



Photos by Rhea Caldwell (2018)

## SOFT POWER LONG BIO (762 words)

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Undoubtedly jazz-tinged but also (more importantly) - vulnerable, genderless, dorky & kitsch, unshowy and meditative. 'Easy Listening' was recorded and mixed by Myles Mumford at Rolling Stock Recording Rooms and mastered by Adam Dempsey at Jack The Bear's Deluxe Mastering. Recorded live in just one day, the LP captures the band at their most playful and relaxed: cutting a broad path through slow moving songs and harmonic landscapes that a times verge on post-rock, pop and cinematic ambient music. With lead single 'Getting Out of the Way of Yourself' a standout track, marking a new direction for the band as they take the traditional acoustic jazz format of the trio and explore new sonic possibilities with electronic processing and pitch shifting effects to a thrilling post-rock climax.

Since their 2016 debut Soft Power have been a regular fixture on the jazz and improvised music scene playing at familiar jazz haunts such as Uptown Jazz Café, Lebowskis, Bar 303, Open Studio as well their more recent cross over appeal into the rock and indie scene which has led them to play successful shows at The Toff in Town and the Rochester Hotel. With their new album Easy Listening slated for a mid-April release, it promises to be Soft Power's most accessible album to date.

Roche says that the title Easy listening is *"quite tongue in cheek but also dead serious. I've lost count of the amount of times people have come up to me after a gig and said that it was 'easy to listen to'. To be fair I don't necessarily feel like this is a bad thing. But I also remember someone reviewed us once and said it was like 'nice restaurant music by the sea'. Originally I found this hilarious but it also raised some deeper questions for me about how jazz and instrumental music (definitely not electronic) is sometimes treated as something that is being 'other', compared to music with vocals and lyrics for instance.*

*When you bring in the intimate format of the trio which is quite revealing and makes one vulnerable – every note and rhythm can have a huge consequence on the overall architecture of the music, it is very tempting then to not want to associate yourself as someone who plays with a soft or smooth sound. I think it's a political choice to play with restraint and not try to dominate the conversation. That's what Soft Power is about. Most of the songs on the album are mid-tempo post-rock ballads with slow moving harmony. That's not the territory jazz would typically cover. In regards to playing the guitar, I love playing the guitar, in particular the sound of the electric guitar but I think in the past I would compose music that would be deliberately in unfriendly guitar keys. I would avoid using some of the idiosyncratic things it can do like bending strings, harmonics, extended techniques, that kind of thing. This record is definitely more embracing of that and you can hear the surf rock, psychedelic influence just as much as you can hear the jazz influence. That was very important for me to get across.*

*A lot of people are quick to point out the political implications of Soft Power (it is a political term coined by Joseph Nye) but I am more interested in breaking down my identity of just another white cis-male playing jazz. The songs aren't about girls or relationships that went wrong, it's about presenting a more genderless and inclusive landscape to jazz and improvised music. I am very conscious of us at the moment being an all male band so I don't want to book gigs and have no female identifying or genderqueer identifying persons on the lineup."*

From fuzzed out guitar, arco double bass melodies to bittersweet pop melodies voiced with extended harmony - Soft Power are positioning themselves as a group that is comfortable on the precipice of jazz and improvisation, balancing technical finesse with intimate and emotionally charged musical statements.



Photo by Timber Music Box

**For more info see:**

<https://matthew-roche.com/softpower>  
<https://sftpwrmusic.bandcamp.com>  
<https://soundcloud.com/softpowermusic>  
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