

SPARKS

Sparks release new single 'JanSport Backpack'

New Album, *MAD!*, to be released May 23rd via Transgressive Records

Album Artwork & Tracklisting Revealed



MAD! album artwork

Tuesday 25th February 2025 – Sparks, brothers Ron and Russell Mael, release 'JanSport Backpack', the second track from the upcoming album *MAD!*, and announce the album will be released **May 23rd** via **Transgressive Records**. The band also reveals full details of *MAD!*'s artwork, tracklisting, and formats, all [available for preorder now](#).

Ever the masters of the musical vignette, this bittersweet, pop song portrays a fading love in Sparks' inimitable fashion, her JanSport backpack a sad reminder of a relationship on the rocks.



Stream/download JanSport Backpack [HERE](#)
Watch this lyric video [HERE](#)

Ron Mael is one of our most acutely perceptive observers of social mores. In a different discipline – dramaturg, cartoonist, novelist, cineaste, chronicler – he'd be a Moliere, a Hogarth, a Fitzgerald, an

Altman, a Swift. He just happens to work within the medium of popular song. His brother Russell Mael has the asset of a talent to put those observations across in a uniquely arresting manner, captivating as a frontman and gifted with a countertenor voice of extraordinary range. The alchemy between Ron on keys and Russell on vocals – Two Hands, One Mouth, to invoke the name of one of their tours – is simply what they do. And they've rarely done it better than on *MAD!*, the band's 28th studio album.

MAD! finds Ron and Russell examining cultural phenomena such as branded backpacks, tattoos, performative devotion (whether to a God, a lover, a celebrity or a sports team), the hegemony of banter, and the rise of influencers. The satire is never on-the-nose, always retaining enough ambiguity for the listener to fill in the blanks. And the exquisitely unusual lexicon (you won't hear the word 'epistemology' on many other albums this year) and cultural references leap out on every listen.

Musically there are nods to New Wave, Synthpop, Art Rock and Electronic Opera – all genres Sparks had hands in pioneering, or straight-up invented. When you hear echoes of other artists, from Air to Shostakovich, you remind yourself that they're all people who Sparks influenced in the first place. (Well, maybe not Shostakovich.)

Ultimately, however, *MAD!* is a modern record, which belongs in, and speaks to, the modern world. The album opens with the song 'Do Things My Own Way', a piece of typically forward-facing progressive pop which was the album's lead single. But it also functions as something of a manifesto for the Maels themselves. Because Sparks are a band who have always, always done things their own way.

***MAD!* Tracklisting**

- 1 Do Things My Own Way
- 2 JanSport Backpack
- 3 Hit Me, Baby
- 4 Running Up A Tab At The Hotel For The Fab
- 5 My Devotion
- 6 Don't Dog It
- 7 In Daylight
- 8 I-405 Rules
- 9 A Long Red Light
- 10 Drowned In A Sea Of Tears
- 11 A Little Bit Of Light Banter
- 12 Lord Have Mercy

***MAD!* physical formats**

- CD
- Cassette
- Black vinyl LP
- Lenticular gatefold sleeve with blue vinyl LP
- Deluxe triple gatefold edition with red vinyl LP and CD (exclusive to store.allsparks.com)

After seven decades making music together Sparks continue to break new ground. On their 2025 tour, the first leg will begin on 8 June in Japan and end on 8 July in Milan. Although Russell performed in Italy once as part of a *Sgt Pepper* anniversary concert and both brothers played there with FFS,

this will be the first-ever Italian Sparks gig. **The tour is already the band's fastest selling to date** - with more international dates to be announced soon due to demand. A full list of dates can be found below, and tickets are available [here](#).

SPARKS MAD! TOUR DATES:

June 2025

08	Japan, Kyoto, ROHM Theatre
10	Japan, Osaka, Zepp Namba
12 & 13	Japan, Tokyo, EX Theater
18 & 19	UK, London, Eventim Apollo
21 & 22	UK, Manchester, O2 Apollo
24	Glasgow, Royal Concert Hall
26	Netherlands, Haarlem, PHIL Haarlem
28	Belgium, Brussels, Cirque Royal
30	France, Paris, La Salle Pleyel

July 2025

01	Germany, Cologne, Gloria-Theater
03	Denmark, Copenhagen, The Koncerthuset
04	Sweden, Stockholm, Gronska Lund Tivoli
06	Germany, Berlin, Uber Eats
08	Italy, Milan, Teatro degli Arcimboldi



Photo credit - Munachi Osegbu

Sparks Online:

More about Sparks:

Most acts, by the time they've been making music together across seven different decades, would have slowed to a crawl, creakily playing the oldies on the heritage circuit and releasing nothing more modern than the occasional Greatest Hits collection.

Sparks aren't most acts. If anything, their rate of productivity has sped up in recent years: since the millennium the duo have released eight new studio albums (including, in 2024, the original Sparks 2013 album recording of *Annette*), a radio opera (*The Seduction Of Ingmar Bergman*), a side-project (Franz Ferdinand collaboration *FFS*), a live album, a film musical (2021's *Annette*, which won a 'Best Director award for Leos Carax and the Best Original Score at the César Awards for the Maels), and several compilations (notably 2019's career-spanning *Past Tense*), toured the world numerous times, as well as appearing in the aforementioned *The Sparks Brothers*. Their laurels remain resoundingly unrested-upon.

Ron Mael (keyboards, songwriting, moustache) and his younger brother Russell (singing, charisma, looks-looks-looks) were born and raised in Los Angeles, and first recorded under the name Urban Renewal Project and subsequently Halfnelson, before settling on the name Sparks in 1972. Despite being mentored and produced by Todd Rundgren and signed by Bob Dylan's manager Albert Grossman, American audiences initially proved unreceptive to Sparks' uniquely arch, ironic aesthetic, and their breakthrough came instead after they relocated to London with a new backing band, scoring a huge hit in 1974 with the cinematic, staccato single 'This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us', and unleashing full-scale Sparksmania in the UK.

In the decades since, one thing that has never faltered is their commitment to artistic innovation. They've moved through numerous genres and phases, including Art-Glam (1974's mega-selling *Kimono My House*), Neo-Charleston (1975's Tony Visconti-produced *Indiscreet*), electronic disco (1979's Giorgio Moroder collaboration *No.1 In Heaven*, which essentially invented the synth duo), synthpop (1994's glorious *Gratuitous Sax & Senseless Violins*) and sampler opera (2002's career-rebooting *Lil' Beethoven*). The only common threads, throughout each era, are the exquisite wit of Ron's lyrics and the complexity of his arrangements, and Russell's heavenly voice.

It's perhaps a result of this restlessness, and their refusal to double down on a safe bet by following the easy commercial path, that Sparks' popularity has been so episodic and unpredictable, both geographically and temporally, their successes springing up across the planet in odd places at odd times. In 1980, for example, they topped the French charts with the sublime 'When I'm With You'. In 1994 the poignant 'When Do I Get To Sing My Way?' reached the German Top 10. And their homeland finally caught on in the Eighties, when they were mistaken by many Americans for New Wave novices.

Belatedly, however, the whole world has woken up to Ron and Russell's genius. They have become regular visitors to the upper echelons of the charts: curiously, the last three Sparks albums (2017's *Hippopotamus*, 2020's *A Steady Drip, Drip, Drip* and 2023's *The Girl Is Crying In Her Latte*) all reached No.7 in the UK. It would be a surprise if *MAD!* didn't do the same, or even better.