

## THE ALARM BIOGRAPHY 2019

On June 28<sup>th</sup> 2019, The Alarm will release **Σ Sigma** exactly one year and one day from the release of its prequel – ‘Equals’, which debuted to an array of positive reviews and chart positions all across the board.

Intended as a sequel, **Σ Sigma** takes up and carries forward the themes that have been expressed since lead singer and songwriter Mike Peters was plunged into a deeply intense period of life, following a relapse from Leukaemia, while his wife Jules’, was also diagnosed and treated for Breast Cancer.

The beginnings of **ΣSigma** can be traced back to the origins that fostered **Equals**, a collection of songs that acted as a retrenchment of original values and a poignant reflection of the tough times the band and it’s fans have had to contend with in recent years. On June 27<sup>th</sup> 2018, and with The Alarm firing on all cylinders again, the band committed to a vast amount of live concerts in support of the new music they had created, and with over 100 shows played, the emotional repercussions became clear for all to see, though the spirit of life-affirming optimism that fuelled every single show.

*“It’s all there in the music of Equals and now Σ Sigma,” says Mike. “I didn’t set out to write about what we were going through. If there was any music in me, it was going to come out naturally, and that’s what happened. I didn’t have a guitar by my side as my wife was having surgery for breast cancer and I was navigating the uncharted waters of a clinical trial for a new cancer drug. All I had were these incredibly strong feelings that I found myself putting into words and writing down onto my phone without even thinking they might form the basis for songs. One day, I put the words on the studio floor and realised, I could make sense of them as music.”*

With so much material – almost 30 finished songs in all – Mike initially envisaged a double album (which started out under the all-embracing handle of Sigma’s opening cut Blood Red Viral Black). *‘All the songs had a similar emotional core although there are also fundamental differences,’* explains Mike. *‘So I divided the songs into categories - inwards / red / blood / outwards / black / viral. Road-testing the new songs live, helped me decide to release the music in two stages. First as Equals / = with the knowledge that a sequel would come in the form of Sigma / Σ, a year later.’*

**Σ SIGMA** has once again been produced by George Williams (who has worked with Mike and the band throughout this entire period), and opens up with a pulsating rocker in the shape of ‘Blood Red Viral Black’, that features bursts of signature guitar colouring from The Cult’s very own instrumental maestro Billy Duffy (*who also supplied the solo on Equals stand out track - ‘Coming Backwards’*).

*“Having Billy Duffy play guitar with The Alarm has become part of our DNA, “says Peters. “It’s a relationship that goes back to the start of this new century, when the beginnings of new era’s for both The Alarm and The Cult were being formed. Blood Red Viral Black defines our relationship as friends and opposites, human beings united through the colour of sound.”*

‘Can You Feel Me’ shows just how deep emotions must have run in the Peters’ household with a lyric fraught by tension and release, while the psychedelic explosion - ‘Brighter Than The Sun’, trips a wire of white heat rock music. ‘Time’ with its eternal musical countdown, echoes the fragility and resolve of the human condition. **Σ Sigma** comes to an apocalyptic ending with ‘Armageddon In The Morning’ and a solitary piano / vocal reprise of ‘Two Rivers’ (a song that spans and connects both albums), only this time, with a completely different lyric and musical focus, bringing unity and closure to all of the themes and explorations.

**Σ Sigma** utilises the vast array of instrumentation that The Alarm currently has at its disposal, with guitarist James Stevenson (who has also performed guitar duties for Gene Loves Jezebel, The Cult, Scott Walker and Tony Visconti's Holy Holy), playing both guitar and bass though a unique combination of pedals, double neck, six and four string instrumentation. Charismatic drummer Smiley drives the rhythm unit with a traditional acoustic drum kit augmented by electric percussion and diverse tribal beats. Pianist Jules Peters deploys a wide-ranging palette of orchestral string and synthesised tones, along with pure pianoforte for some of the stripped down sections the songs demand. Throughout, Mike Peters is at the forefront with his impassioned vocal delivery and ever changing use of electro-acoustic instrumentation, custom developed by British luthiers Auden Guitars, to represent the beating heart of the group's signature sound.

*'When we started, one of the things that set us apart from other groups was the way we put electric pickups into acoustic guitars,' says Mike. 'For both Equals and Sigma, I created the ultimate, custom-made Alarm guitar – one with an electric pickup that could also be played acoustically. I also experiment with loop pedals and other effects. I use a lot of old / new school technology to create sound and creative situations that I can respond to musically. In the rehearsal room, I learnt to create the sound of a full band while I was turning the Σ SIGMA lyrics into songs. The technology set me free.'*

**Σ SIGMA** is the latest chapter in an inspirational story that has seen The Alarm sell six million albums while clocking up 17 Top Fifty singles in the UK. Formed in 1981 in the Welsh seaside resort of Rhyl, The Alarm broke through on the back of the singles Unsafe Building, The Stand, Sixty Eight Guns and Where Were You Hiding When The Storm Broke?, their music a passionate blend of amped-up acoustic guitars, harmonica and Mike's stirring voice. A string of successful albums saw them bracketed alongside U2, The Waterboys, Simple Minds and Big Country as part of Eighties rock's distinctive Celtic fringe. After an emotional swansong at Brixton Academy in 1991, the original line-up splintered, with Mike going it alone and joining forces with Billy Duffy in a short-lived band called Coloursound. The lingering allure of his old group proved hard to resist, however, and Peters entered a new millennium back at the helm of The Alarm. The group's activities since that 1999 re-launch have included an ambitious album project, the Poppy Fields Bond, that saw them release five studio albums of original material in the first five months of 2003 and a 'fake band' escapade the following year in which they concealed their true identity by releasing a single, 45 RPM, as The Poppy Fields. They created a global news story when the song unexpectedly hit the UK charts. Mike Peters was diagnosed with Chronic Leukaemia in 2005 and although disabled from touring, still managed to continue making new music through the albums Guerilla Tactics and Direct Action which was followed in 2018 with the release of 'Equals', charting on both sides of the Atlantic.

Mike Peters is also co-founder of the Love Hope Strength Cancer Foundation and after taking musicians to many of the world's most iconic mountain locations to perform fund raising concerts (Everest, Kilimanjaro, Snowdon), signing up over 200,000 people to the stem cell donor registry that has resulted in over 4,500 potentially lifesaving matches for blood cancer patients who need a second chance of life, Mike Peters was recently awarded the MBE (Most Honourable Member of the British Empire), by HRH Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace.

Mike Peters is a man who refuses to be beaten and his drive in the face of adversity is inspiring to many.

*"All I have ever tried to do in my life as a musician and songwriter", says Mike. "Is to write honestly and openly. I never thought my personal life would become so wrapped up with the lifeblood of The Alarm and the charity Love Hope Strength. 'Sigma' exists for that reason, it's about the will to stay alive, the summation of all that I am, and all that I have to give".*