Sleigh Bells // *Bunky Becky Birthday Boy* [2025]

Sleigh Bells are so many things: era-defining, a sonic boom of energy, your favorite hyperpop musician's favorite reference. But what are Alexis Krauss and Derek Miller to each other? Take away everything else — the critical acclaim, the inexplicable clash of sweet and aggressive, birthed in the late 2000s on *Treats* and expanded across the next decade on five more albums — Alexis and Derek are simply best friends forever.

You can't just *have* a soulmate status; it has to be earned. Over the course of nearly two decades, ever since July 2008 when Derek asked Alexis if she'd consider starting a band with him, Sleigh Bells has been a bedrock and a creative guiding force for both artists. Whatever else may change — cities, jobs, partners, parenthood — Alexis and Derek have seen each other through everything. Now, as the duo prepare to launch their seventh album this year, *Bunky Becky Birthday Boy*, they're looking back on an unbelievable friendship while also greeting a brand-new (and every bit as explosive) chapter of Sleigh Bells.

"What stands out for me is the intimacy, the trust, and the relationship that Derek and I now have, and I think a lot of that comes from the fact that our band has always just been the two of us," Alexis says. The fact that we're the heart and soul of this is what's enabled us to grow so close and build this easy partnership where there's a free flow of thoughts, emotions, and ideas. I've had some huge life changes in the past couple years, including having a baby. To now be on the eve of putting out a new record, having gone through pregnancy and childbirth, and now having a toddler who Derek adores — the band has always been at the core of all of these big life events. It never felt peripheral."

Derek adds, "We've officially experienced every extreme. We've been through tragedy, grief, addiction, as well as the absolute best moments of our lives. We've run the gamut, and it makes the whole thing a lot richer, really."

Following 2021's *Texis*, *Bunky Becky Birthday Boy* blasts into the room with razor-sharp guitars, ultra-sticky pop choruses, floor-shaking rhythms, and indelible chants, which kick off on the album's instant-classic title track. The pair are in constant communication with each other; even when they're not actively recording music, they're sending tracks back and forth. And that's how *Bunky Becky Birthday Boy* came to be. "I'm always obsessively thinking about the next record and working on a new batch of songs, just because, honestly, it's a lot of fun," Derek says. "It's cathartic and emotional and intense and frustrating. I feel lucky to be able to have my days revolve around it."

The playfully alliterative title is a symbolic quilt, weaving together endings and beginnings while loosely looping in the band's own history. "'Becky' was a nickname for Alexis' dog Rizz, who passed away in December 2023. She was on every American tour with us. She's in videos. When she passed away, Alexis and I had been talking about writing an anthem for her," Derek says. "And then Alexis' son Wilder was born, and he's the birthday boy. Even though the title sounds a little ridiculous – and it's totally okay to laugh at it — if you peel the layer back with a little bit of context, it's actually life and death. We lost somebody that we love, and we gained somebody that we love."

After tracking demos at Derek's home studio in upstate New York, the producer-guitarist arranged to live track drums in New Jersey with Steve Evetts and Chris Hornbrook, who played drums in Derek's previous band, Poison the Well. "Gridding drums was fresh and exciting at first, because I was coming out of a hardcore band," Derek says. "But it kind of became a habit, and I wanted to break out of that."

The record immediately bounds to life on the effervescent opener, "Bunky Pop," which crashes in with gnawing guitar riffs and Alexis' pulsing chants. "We wanted the track to sound like a dog having the best moment of his life without any of the burden of self consciousness," Derek says. "'Bunky Pop' informed the entire record. Instead of stopping, 'Bunky Becky' kind of became a character. We wanted to give her a friend, who would be Roxette Rick. It's the story of two friends, and there's definitely a little bit of autobiography in there, but it's a work of fiction as well."

The story of Bunky Becky and Roxette Rick evolves to the swaggering "Wanna Start A Band?," an irresistible collision of glam metal, stabbing synths, vocal whoops, and in-your-face beats. Just as Derek asked Alexis to start a band 17 years ago, "Wanna Start A Band?" finds the duo's alter egos — Becky and Roxette — forming their creative partnership. "The riff could not be any louder or more confident," Derek says. But what's actually happening is, when you're asking somebody to start a band, you are the one in a position of vulnerability. I'm coming to you and knocking on your door in an extremely scared and vulnerable place, because that's how highly I think of you."

On the rager-ready "Badly," Sleigh Bells roll out a quintessential barn burner anthem in the vein of Beastie Boys' "Fight For Your Right" and like minded '80s jams. Alexis elaborates: "When I sent Derek the scratch for the verses, I was like, 'This sounds like the Go-Go's, Cyndi Lauper, the Cars, and the Bangles. They've always been a huge inspiration for us. I hear 'Badly' and it just makes me want to take over the world in the best way."

Sleigh Bells seal off the record with “Pulse Drips Quiet,” which experiments with rhythm and tone and reflects the duo’s unshakable bond. “I think I'm more proud of that song than any other on the record,” Alexis says. “It’s about creating a trust that's so strong that you know we're in this for forever. You can count on me. I will be there for you.”

“I never think about putting music out in the world expecting that it's going to be heard by a lot of people,” Alexis continues. “But I know the people that love our band and have told me stories about how we’ve gotten them through some really dark moments, I know with certainty that this song will be that for them.”