

ALBUM REVIEW

Dreamlike, muted and beguiling – yet never quite airborne



POLIÇA
Dreams Go

★★★★★

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Dreams Go offers a subdued, half-hour excursion through familiar trip-hop textures, sterling vocal lines and a handful of sonic bijoux – yet the record never quite musters the decisive thrust required to render it unforgettable.

BY **NICOLAJ ROOS** / PHOTO: ZOE PRINDS-FLASH, PRESS PHOTO

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Its sampled, breakbeat-heavy palette – frequently shading into trip-hop proper – had, for the longest time, misled me into assuming that the American outfit Poliça hailed from the 1990s. Their latest release, *Dreams Go*, does precious little to dispel that impression.

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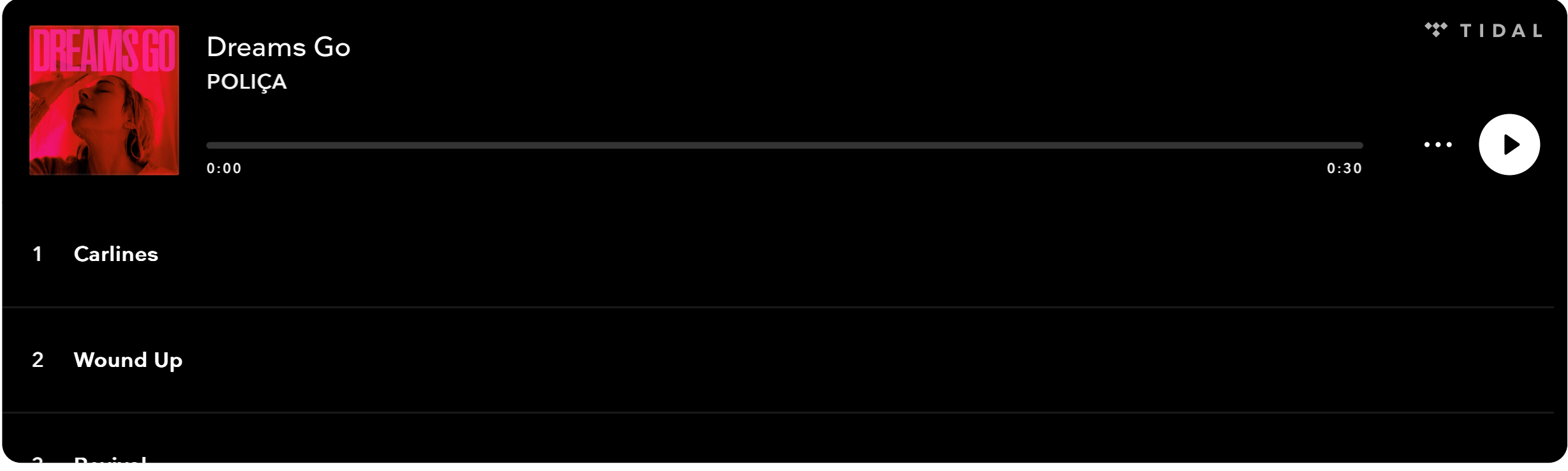
The album comprises a mere eight tracks, clocking in at thirty minutes. The band just managed to complete it with their original bassist, Chris Bierden, before he tragically lost the ability to perform. The diagnosis: glioblastoma, an aggressively malignant brain cancer.

In an era when the single – rather than the album – enjoys unmitigated prestige, it is faintly anomalous that no lead single was issued at all. Should your head habitually bob to speedcore, gabber or skate punk, this record will almost certainly evade your radar. It is no exaggeration to characterise *Dreams Go* as decidedly soporific in its prevailing temperament. There is, unmistakably, no haste here.

Vocalist Channy Leaneagh possesses a consistently delicate timbre. Her distinctly personal tone renders her immediately recognisable – for better and for worse. One does, regrettably, run the risk of growing a touch fatigued by her signature delivery. I found myself yearning for greater experimentation. On the fleeting occasions when a male backing vocal emerges, the effect is transformative, adding precisely the seasoning required to move a track along – considerably more so than the twangy, slacker-adjacent hue that seems deeply ingrained in Leaneagh's musical DNA.

For a paradigmatic instance of the album's 90s-inflected sensibility, consider the opener, "Carlines". With its mechanical – and, for Poliça, somewhat habitual – breakbeats and sampled drums, one is swiftly transported into Lamb territory. "Revival", by contrast, is a more pop-leaning affair, its vocal line often permitted to stand conspicuously unadorned. And then there is "She Knows Me", which initially presents as a pared-back miniature consisting solely of voice and Spanish guitar. In a remarkably deft manoeuvre, a skein of synths and atmospheric ornament gradually insinuates itself. The result is both elegant and admirably realised.

Taken in sum, *Dreams Go* is an assured and well-wrought release. There are numerous small gems scattered across its brief running time. Yet it never quite ascends to the stratosphere.



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