



ALDORA BRITAIN RECORDS

The Global Independent & Underground Music E-Zine
Issue 191, Monday 22nd July 2024
“Tomorrow’s Music Today”

FEATURING THE SOUNDS OF...

John Steam Jr., Modus Opera and Eye, Bay Station, Mandy Woods, The Low Tide, Moving Coil, Ledfoot, Burner Herzog, and Gordon Michaels

Live Spotlight: RICHARD HAWLEY
with John Smith @ De Montfort Hall,
Leicester

Written and compiled by Tom Hilton

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“We all deserve a chance, to join in the dance.”

Jacob Tucker, Grey Start Ghost

Highlight of the Day

This week's 'best of', the 'greatest hits' package, the 'anthology collection'. Our featured artists discuss origin stories, their influences, the sounds of tomorrow, and much, much more.



John Steam Jr.: *"Simple was a pretty interesting record for me. I just came back from a one-month long US trip where we went from New Orleans to Chicago and made sure not to miss Memphis and Nashville."*

Ricardo Zegri (Modus Opera and Eye): *"This is where the global shutdown of 2020 comes in ... My inspiration became an obsession, and eschewing all else, I locked myself in the basement to write and produce two concept albums that year, while laying the groundwork for a third."*

Deborah Crooks (Bay Station): *"I moved to Alameda and we started writing together to see what that would be like. We were having fun with it and it grew into its own thing which is now Bay Station."*

Mandy Woods: *"When I spent a decade in Austin, Texas in the 1990s I fell in love with country music and Americana, drawn in by the storytelling element that is such a big part of both genres."*

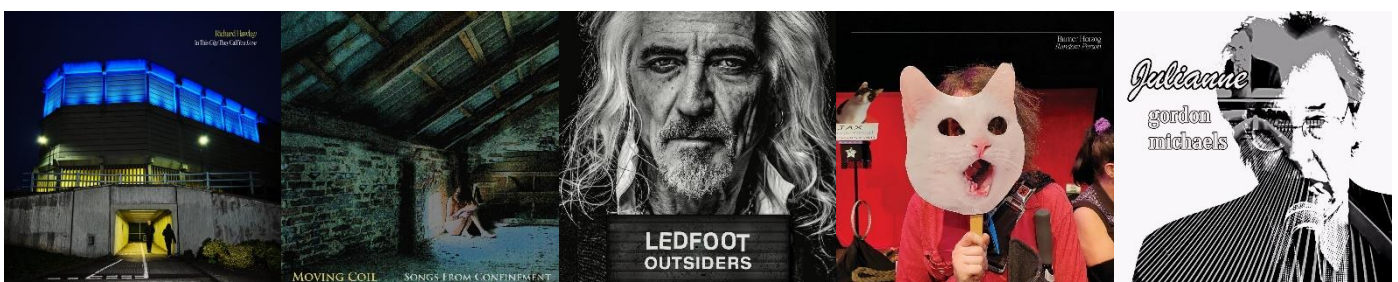
Michael McCann (The Low Tide): *"I'm easily drawn to the darker side with my lyrics, I'm a big Lou Reed and Scott Walker fan. On the face of things my lyrics are straightforward, however, they have darker undercurrents for sure."*

Luis Couto (Moving Coil): *"By 1998 a friend of mine taught me how to record using a computer. It was quite an adventure to record with the equipment I had at my disposal, an electric guitar that didn't sound well, a cheap microphone, and an amp that a friend lent me."*

Tim Scott McConnell (Ledfoot): *"It's mostly observational ... or a variation on something I've experienced or been a witness too. I'm constantly working on a few songs at once. I've done it for so many years the process is just part of who I am."*

Burner Herzog: *"I would say it's a metaphysical perspective. I want to write something you hear in dreams ... There's no fiction, nor even much conscious thought, but there is a lot of writing to find something true."*

Gordon Michaels: *"I knew I wanted to be a part of all this energy and style but I wasn't sure just how yet, I was sixteen and had just started to self-learn guitar."*



Something Old, Something New

JOHN STEAM JR. is a modern-day troubadour who exists at the intersection between storytelling folk and hard hitting punk, magnificently combining the two to create a potent and revitalising sonic homebrew. His all-original compositions ebb and flow fantastically throughout the world of Americana music, stopping off at the spaces of blues, country, bluegrass, roots music, and many more. John's exceptional output has most recently been captured through a series of brilliant collaborative releases, featuring contemporary players including Hannes Stegmeier, Karin Rabhansl, and Daniel Willem. Travelling further back, listeners have been treated to such unforgettable pearls as 2020's *Simple*, 2022's *Windshift*, and 2023's *Revisited*. Taking a break from his outstanding new releases, John sat down for a chat with *Aldora Britain Records* about his musical journey so far. We discussed formative creative memories, his approach to songwriting and songcraft, a selection of his recorded output, and much more. That exclusive in-depth conversation is published here for the very first time.

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Aldora Britain Records: Hello John, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic songwriter based over in Nuremberg. It is amazing how music can bring us together. Let's start off by travelling back in time. What are some of your earliest musical memories and what was it that first pushed you towards pursuing this passion of yours?

John Steam Jr.: I'm doing alright! On a global scale I'm even doing excellent, I try not to forget this! My parents got divorced when I was a kindergartener, and one of my earliest memories is listening to the 'Red Album' of The Beatles on headphones through my father's record player every time I visited him. Later on I've been socialised through listening to punk rock music while skateboarding.

Aldora Britain Records: 2024 has seen you unveil several superb collaborative releases. Your recent outings with Hannes Stegmeier and Karin Rabhansl really stand out. How did these recordings come to be? How did you meet these players and what was the initial spark that brought you together on a creative and musical level?

John Steam Jr.: Thanks man, I really appreciate that. These songs are actually cover versions that found their way into my live sets over the years. After playing around four-hundred-and-fifty shows I decided to swap these for new ones but wanted to record them before that. I did these mainly for myself but after asking Karin and Hannes, and Daniel Willem with whom I did 'Drink Up and Go Home', I really liked the recordings and decided to publish them.

Karin is a longtime friend and a very active part of Nuremberg's music scene. We're sharing our work ethics and the DIY spirit, even if our sound is quite different. Hannes is the bass player of The Feverdreams, which is the band that accompanies me from time to time. He's an incredible musician, songwriter, and all over nice guy, just the type of person you want to work with!

Aldora Britain Records: Back in 2022, you released a brilliant EP entitled *Windshift*. I have just discovered this outing over on Bandcamp, but it has made such a strong impression already. What are your memories from writing, recording and releasing this set, and is there anything that you would edit or change looking back with the benefit of hindsight?



“Simple was a pretty interesting record for me. I just came back from a one-month long US trip where we went from New Orleans to Chicago and made sure not to miss Memphis and Nashville.”

John Steam Jr.: *Windshift* was completely written in an old beekeeper’s that was turned into a little studio. I really missed playing full band at this point and decided to specifically write a band EP. It’s the first release after becoming a father for me and it was quite a stretch to go there and write and still be present for my daughter. I spent a lot of nights sitting there, writing these songs, and then driving home at 2 a.m. just to get up at 5:30 a.m. to play building blocks. I loved watching the band bring my arrangements to life, to hit Schwarzkopf Studios and actually record these songs and playing the release concert.

I think every record is part of my journey and I’m pretty happy with how *Windshift* turned out. I try not to regret things in music, because all these steps are necessary. Would I do things differently with the experience I have now? Definitely. Back then it was all perfect and that’s what matters to me.



Aldora Britain Records: Previously, if we travel back to 2020, you released an outstanding album called *Simple*. This was my introduction to your work, so I look back on it especially fondly. How do you reflect on this set as a whole now, and how would you say you have grown and evolved as a musician and songwriter since its initial release back then?

John Steam Jr.: *Simple* was a pretty interesting record for me. I just came back from a one-month long US trip where we went from New Orleans to Chicago and made sure not to miss Memphis and Nashville. I was very inspired by a lot of the music we were able to experience on the trip and some of the songs are about things that happened right there. I think I felt the urgent need to write a couple of these songs to be able to sustain my beginning of ‘tour life’ and to have enough of a set to make it through a headlining show. I also felt a lot like

transitioning from the punk goes acoustic vibe to sounding more rootsy and Americana. I wanted the record to sound ‘unexcited’, not really lo-fi, but raw and unpolished. I decided to go for a very specific way to mix the vocals and I wouldn’t do that again. I learned that if you want to sound a specific way you might just have to learn to write, play, and sing like that. That’s my main takeaway, put the effort into the songs and not into the production.

Aldora Britain Records: It is a gem of a record from start to finish, but I would like to pick out two personal favourites. Let’s go for ‘Simple’ and ‘Lord of the Swamps’. For each, what is the story behind the song, and can you remember the moment it came to be? Did anything in particular inspire them and what do they mean to you as the writer?

John Steam Jr.: Ha! Good choice. ‘Simple’ was a universal gift. I have no idea how I wrote the song. It was written in about twenty minutes, from start to finish. I was just noodling around on my guitar and humming and it all happened out of the blue.

The song is about not wanting to spend my time with complex things, machines, and time consuming processes. I sold my espresso machine and got a very basic pour over coffee solution, swapped the electric coffee grinder to a mechanical one, and really enjoyed how ‘simple’ all of this was. I knew I had to spend three extra minutes on making a coffee, but I didn’t have to deal with broken parts, empty batteries, or cleaning the coffee machine for hours. I think that’s been the initial spark.

“I played my very first acoustic show and was blown away from how straight forward it all was, the people, the music, and especially the possibility of just travelling with a guitar without the hustle of finding dates with a band.”

‘Lord of the Swamps’ tells the story of a tour guide in Louisiana who we met doing a swamp tour back in 2019. He was an impressive guy who took off his shirt during the tour. His chest showed a big scar that reminded me of an alligator’s jaw. I got pretty curious and decided to walk up to him and ask if he got bitten when he reached into the swamp and pulled out an alligator. He held it over his head stating, ‘This is an alligator.’

In that moment I felt really small and weak. I’m making a living from playing acoustic guitar and telling stories while that badass pulls alligators out of the swamp. Being back at the motel I couldn’t help but think of him and I was trying to find the right perspective which finally led me to this... That guy was probably born in these swamps, risking his life every day to get an extra \$5 tip, while I’m the privileged kid that could just spend a day in his world and then go back to my life. I realised that he might be the one that would be jealous and definitely would swap lives. That’s why I wrote him this song.

Aldora Britain Records: As you well know, I love the Steam sound and your approach to making music. Elements of Americana, folk, punk, and so much more. How would you say this style of yours came about, what goes into it for you, and who are some of your biggest influences and inspirations as an artist currently?

John Steam Jr.: I’m just working with what I have. I listened to a lot of American punk bands when I was a kid which led me to join punk and hardcore bands and tour Germany and parts of Europe through my twenties. After I witnessed Chuck Ragan and Austin Lucas transferring their punk rock attitude to folk, Americana, and country songs I got hooked. That introduced me to Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan which led me to a lot of amazing contemporary acts. I decided to start an ‘acoustic’ project myself and became the sideman for a guy called Brickwater. After doing that for a couple of years I played my very first acoustic show and was blown away from how straight forward it all was, the people, the music, and especially the possibility of just travelling with a guitar without the hustle of finding dates with a band, renting cars, and juggling four other people’s sensitivities. It made me want to keep doing this.



Aldora Britain Records: A broad question to finish. We have been through such a unique time in history over the last few years. Both politically and within society, and that is before you throw in the pandemic. How have the last several years impacted on you personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both for the good and the bad? I am curious to hear your insights.

John Steam Jr.: That’s a tough one and I’m not really sure if I can answer this in its entirety within this format. The short answer is this. I somehow got even more political, social injustice just became even less bearable for me. I realised that we’re having double standards in all regards of life and that we should be more aware of our privilege. We’re about to ruin the world for future generations and we’re still putting profit over people, as if money could buy us a second planet or at least some more time. All of that became a big part of my songwriting and my persona, songwriting is my coping mechanism, I guess. The next single is going to be ‘Hard on Yourself Kid’ and it will be the most political song I have written. I think that’s the outcome of the past few years.

“The music industry is exactly what the term promises, an industry. It’s about streamlining processes that should never be streamlined. It’s sanding off the edges to make individuals become generic.”

I don’t really care nor rely on the music industry. I’m a DIY artist. I record most of my music myself, I engineer it, do the artwork. The music industry is exactly what the term promises, an industry. It’s about streamlining processes that should never be streamlined. It’s sanding off the edges to make individuals become generic and it’s got a lot to do with getting paid for other people’s work. I spent some time in a small band that had a major record deal for a short period of time. All of the others stopped making music once we were dropped by the label. It’s a shitshow and I guess AI is going to kill that business, and that might just be well deserved. I hope for all the artists, small indie labels that run their businesses for the right reasons, and all the amazing and passionate people within the ‘business’, that music fans all over the world will refocus on the real deal, humans with all their shortcomings expressing themselves through music, and help other to get by through doing this.

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist? **John:** Tonight it’s going to be Sadurn. Ask me tomorrow to get a different answer!

AB Records: Favourite album? **John:** *Radiator* by Sadurn, at least tonight. **AB Records:** Last album you listened to from start to finish? **John:** It’s *Radiator* by Sadurn, but I’ll choose John Moreland’s *Big Bad Luv* to give you something else than Sadurn.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **John:** Donots, a German punk rock band in 2003. **AB Records:**

Loudest gig as an audience member? **John:** Some local hardcore show, I’m sure. John Coffey from The Netherlands was pretty loud as well. **AB Records:** Style icon? **John:** Bob Dylan got a Nobel Prize and didn’t go to pick it up, so Bob Dylan maybe.

AB Records: Favourite film? **John:** *Donnie Darko*. Hard to say honestly, I loved many movies but since I’m constantly short on time I don’t really see many. **AB Records:** Favourite TV show? **John:** Last thing I watched was *Gravity Falls* and I really loved that. **AB Records:** Favourite up and coming artist? **John:** Hello Emerson from Ohio.



Used to Mean Freedom to Me

‘Agnostic gospel and soulful nihilism for the people.’ This is one of many fantastically apt descriptions that has been anointed upon Ricardo Zegri’s sensational **MODUS OPERA AND EYE** project. Taking influence from such noir storytelling mavericks as Tom Waits and Leonard Cohen, this California based tunesmith creates a unique musical universe that explores mysterious and spookily haunting themes. This brilliantly peculiar foundation has been explored on several underground LP gems so far, namely the trilogy of *Church of the Lost*, *The Devil’s Workshop*, and *Memento Mori*. Politics, fear, death, sickness, isolation are all present, with an undercurrent and hint of juxtaposing hope and laughter and friendship. With these LPs now all having passed their second anniversary or more, Ricardo chatted with *Aldora Britain Records*, reflecting on the events that led to their creation. We discussed his approach to songwriting and songcraft, a selection of his recorded output, popular original compositions, and much more. That exclusive conversation is published here in full for the first time.

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Aldora Britain Records: Hello Ricardo, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic artist from over in California. It is amazing how music can bring us together. Let’s start off by traveling back in time. What are some of your earliest musical memories and what was it that first pushed you towards pursuing this passion of yours?

Ricardo Zegri: My parents were musicians and music lovers who came out of the Summer of love in San Francisco. Some of my earliest memories were being backstage at Grateful Dead shows or slipping in the back door of blues clubs with my mom. She also taught me my first song on mandolin when I was about seven years old, the rocksteady tune ‘Johnny Too Bad’ by The Slickers. When I turned ten, I had a sort of mid-adolescence crisis and decided that I needed to find direction in life. It was a tossup between playing football or drums. Music looked less

painful, so I sort of arbitrarily chose to be a drummer. Turns out it was the right choice. Music grabbed hold of me right away and didn’t let go.

My first drum set was a tambourine and couch cushions. When I was twelve, I graduated to a couple real drums that a family friend handed down, propped up on phonebooks, and started Shrapnel Head, my first punk band, with a couple of my stoner friends. This started me on the long and eclectic road of obsession across multiple genres and instruments over the years. But I have never lost my passion for drumming. It will always be my first love, and I still play them loads and often in my rock band High Card Drifters.

Aldora Britain Records: And now, let’s take a leap forward to the mighty Modus Opera and Eye. The beginnings and early days of this project must have been an invigorating time. How did it come to be? What was the initial spark? Is it an outlet for your solo musings or more of a collaborative kind of feel and approach?

Ricardo Zegri: In San Francisco in the late 1990s there was a rare and wonderful time when hyper theatrical weirdo rock took over the scene. Bands like Idiot Flesh, Charming Hostess, Eskimo, Rube Waddell, and Mark Growden were filling big venues and blowing my impressionable young mind with their theatricality and talent. That inspiration was the foundation where I built a musical journey, founding numerous art bands including Satyrica, Crumpled Napkin, American Bindi, and others.

“This is where the global shutdown of 2020 comes in ... My inspiration became an obsession, and eschewing all else, I locked myself in the basement to write and produce two concept albums that year, while laying the groundwork for a third.”

The first stirrings of Modus Opera and Eye started back in 2014 when I was working on a massive twenty-seven song concept album called *The Lost Parade* with my band 5 Cent Coffee. In writing for that record, I found myself exploring themes around faith and death, and wrote what would be my first ‘agnostic gospel’ songs, before I had coined the phrase as the genre for Modus Opera and Eye. When my mother passed away in 2019, I felt a draw to return to these themes and fully explore where they would take me artistically, and personally. The desire was there, now I just needed the time. This is where the global shutdown of 2020 comes in. That year would end up being my most productive year as an artist. My inspiration became an obsession, and eschewing all else, I locked myself in the basement to write and produce two concept albums that year, while laying the groundwork for a third. I taught myself how to play banjo, piano, organ, and accordion, all of which would become integral to the sound of the project and set it apart from anything I had done before.

Aldora Britain Records: In 2022, you released a stellar album called *Memento Mori*. I have actually just discovered this one on Bandcamp, but it has made a strong impression already. What are your memories from writing, recording and releasing this set, and is there anything that you would edit or change with the benefit of hindsight?

Ricardo Zegri: Glad you enjoyed it! I wrote most of the music on piano which was a first for me. As a result this record has a bit more of a sombre tone than the previous two, but it was where my head was at and I try not to argue with the muse when she’s kind enough to stop by. Since the world had opened up during the recording process, I also invited more guest personnel to come in to flesh out the sound. Introducing cello and violins, which added a richness that I really enjoyed.

As far as hindsight goes, I see recording music as a snapshot in the life of the song and the artist. Songs change and evolve as they are played live and hopefully the artist also improves at their craft as the years go by. While the perfectionist in me can always find something I would do differently in every song I’ve recorded, I wouldn’t go back in time if I could. That moment is part of my evolution as an artist and a human being. It would be like photoshopping my adult face onto family pictures from my childhood. That kid hadn’t earned the scars yet, I look at him and remember where he was and what happened next. The same goes for music.

Aldora Britain Records: I would now like to pick out two personal favourites of mine from the record. Let’s focus on ‘Blow Me Down’ and ‘Angel of Death’. For each, what is the story behind the song, and can you remember the moment it came to be? Did anything in particular inspire them and what do they mean to you as the writer and artist?

Ricardo Zegri: ‘Blow Me Down’ came to me in the middle of the night around 3 a.m. I had been sleeping peacefully when I was awoken by police sirens on my block. There was an arrest in progress at the apartment building across the street. I got up and went out to the porch with my phone camera to make sure the cops didn’t shoot anyone and get away with it, a real problem in America sadly. Fortunately the whole thing ended without incident, but I was wide awake and in a weird mood. I decided to consult the piano about it and sat at the keyboard where chords and a melody came spilling out. It was one of those rare and wonderful gifts from the



“I wouldn’t go back in time if I could. That moment is part of my evolution as an artist and a human being. It would be like photoshopping my adult face onto family pictures from my childhood. That kid hadn’t earned the scars yet.”

aether, a fully formed piece of music delivered by the muse or the subconscious, whatever you believe in. When that happens you just have to get out of the way and try to grab the mojo while it’s there.

Lyrically, there was something vaguely nautical about the music and my sleep deprived brain jumped immediately to the Popeye the Sailor cartoons of my youth for some reason. I thought about the dark private moments of this hopelessly romantic sailor man, living in an endless loop of rejection and heartbreak as the love of his life leaves him for the draw of gold or brute strength. Forcing him to compromise his pacifist ways, eat performance enhancing spinach, and save her from her folly in the end, again and again. I took the theme very seriously, maybe too seriously, and I think I can safely say this is the saddest song about Popeye the Sailor ever written. If you hear a sadder one, let me know.

‘Angel of Death’ is actually the only cover on the album. It was the last song Hank Williams wrote before his death by drug overdose in 1953. Somehow mortality was on his mind a couple weeks before and he penned this simple tune about getting your affairs in order and your sins counted before the end. I learned it from a version performed by one of my heroes, the late Shane MacGowan. It was the first song I recorded for the record and I kind of built the *Memento Mori* theme around it. In fact the original working title for the album was *Angel of Death and Other Stories*.



Aldora Britain Records: Previously, if we travel back to 2020, you released a seminal offering in the form of *The Devil’s Workshop*. This was also my introduction to your music. How do you reflect on this set as a whole now, and how would you say you have grown and evolved as an artist since its initial release back then?

Ricardo Zegri: *The Devil’s Workshop* was the follow-up to my first release, *The Church of the Lost*, and is very much linked thematically and sonically. I was writing and recording tracks for the record at the same time I was mixing and mastering the first, so it’s the next breath of a continuing sentence.

The first album introduces the concept of ‘agnostic gospel’ and focuses on *The Church of the Lost* as a sort of neighbourhood dive bar of the mind, a temple for those who carry the triumphs of yesterday and the cold regrets of today

in equal measure. A prayer of those who live near enough to the gutter to see the beauty hiding there. It’s about grabbing those moments as they roll away, like condensation on a glass. Finding the magic in one second of time, even as it soaks into a stained beer coaster.

The Devil’s Workshop is a story about sin and the snake pit of good intentions. A story about love and death and how they shape our days. It’s also about the misunderstood motivations of rebellion and the cowardice of refusing to take a side. How idle hands are ‘the devil’s workshop’, as well as the mouth, the eyes, the cloven hooves of the beast that lives inside us all, beating the drum of defiance, offering a feast of apples in a garden built on sacrifice.

I pushed myself hard with this record and explored some new musical ideas such as incorporating field recordings and sound effects, analogue synthesizer sounds, and some non-traditional instrumentation. While I

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am always most enthusiastic about whatever my latest song or project is, I think, of all the things I’ve recorded, I might be most proud of this record and would recommend it as the gateway into the Modus Opera and Eye universe for a new listener.

Aldora Britain Records: As you well know, I love the Modus Opera and Eye sound and your approach to making music. Blues, experimentation, noir elements, it is all in there. How would you say this style of yours came about, what goes into it for you, and who are some of your biggest influences and inspirations as an artist and performer?

Ricardo Zegri: Thank you so much for listening, I am really glad you enjoy it. I call my genre ‘agnostic gospel and soulful nihilism for the people’. The sound came out of a desire to express my true self and give oxygen to the questions I grapple with around life, death, and all the noise in between. With this music, I hope to break down the walls I have put up between me and my audience and get to the truth within the art. I realise how silly that sounds considering I use a stage name and persona for this project, but the truth is, this work is the most personal, honest, and vulnerable shit I have ever done, on or off stage. If you want to pull the curtain back and see the real me, just listen to these records to come to a show, it’s all there.

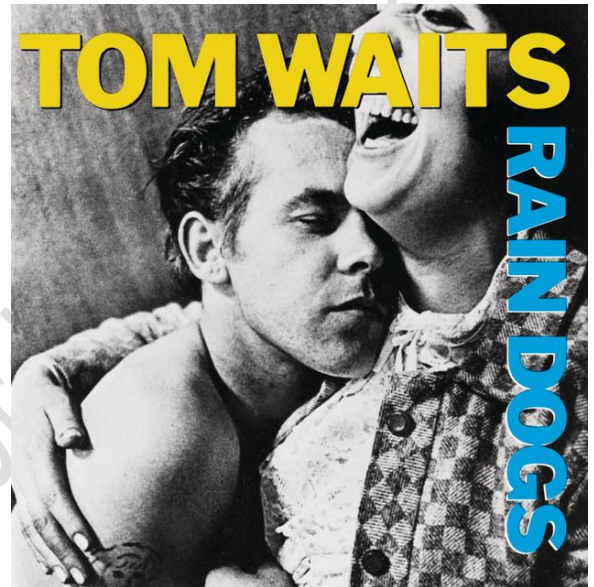
My influences are many but the greatest has to be Tom Waits. Listening to a Waits record is like a masterclass in songwriting, sound craft, and artistic integrity. He would have to be my biggest influence. Other influences include Leonard Cohen, Slim Cessna’s Auto Club, Tori Amos, Iggy Pop, Frank Zappa, Pink Floyd, and Jewlia Eisenberg to name a few.

Aldora Britain Records: A broad question to finish. We have been through such a unique time in history over the last few years. Both politically and within society, and that is before you throw in the pandemic. How have the last several years impacted on you personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both for the good and the bad? I am curious to hear your insights.

Ricardo Zegri: I went through a total transformation as an artist over the pandemic years. Expanding my horizons and pushing myself in ways I really didn’t think were possible. While it was a hard time for the world with so much suffering, I have to be honest and say I came out of it a better person and a much better artist. It turned a mirror onto where I had been resting on my laurels and stagnating.

It also pushed me to develop my web presence, since YouTube or Facebook were the only concert venues available, which is important for getting your stuff heard I suppose. It’s how you found me after all, and I am thankful for that. The dark side of this is that the pandemic fast tracked a shift in the music industry away from art for art’s sake and towards a gross prostitution of the craft centred around streaming and content creation. Chasing likes, making daily bullshit videos, and begging or paying to be on playlists feels antithetical to the purpose of art in the world. It has become all about homogenising the audience and feeding the beast fresh meat for the ‘low attention span theatre’ of the internet. Now we have the emergence of AI, writing songs and plagiarising generations of human beings who have sacrificed so much to bring a little bit of light into the world with their music. It has all left a very bad taste in my mouth.

Our only recourse is to demand nothing less than the real thing. Go to small shows in your hometown, buy a T-shirt from the band. Find their music and pay them for it. Stop supporting artless Silicon Valley executives. Or

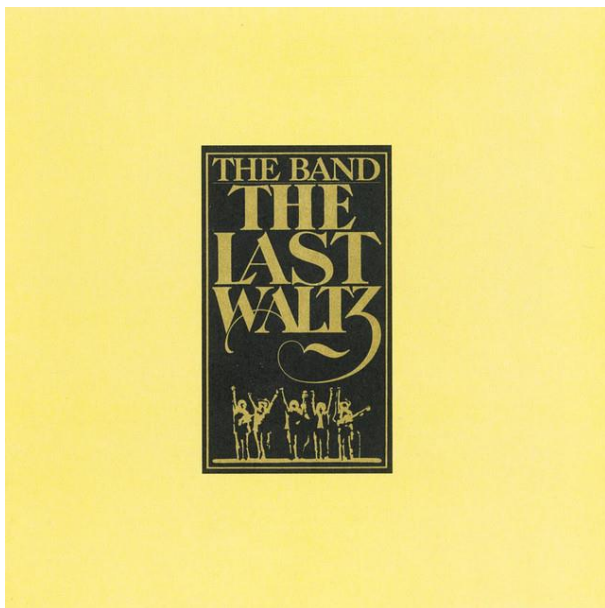


“The dark side of this is that the pandemic fast tracked a shift in the music industry away from art for art's sake and towards a gross prostitution of the craft centred around streaming and content creation.”

better yet, pick up a guitar yourself and strum. Sing in the car and in the shower. Whatever you do, strive to make and support music that truly moves you and that isn't about selling ads. Stand up for art and defend it. No matter what is wrong in the world, art and culture will respond and see us through. Even when we get chewed up and spit out, our soul will be intact if we shield it with a good song.

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist? **Ricardo:** Tom Waits. **AB Records:** Favourite album? **Ricardo:** This is an impossible question as it changes daily. Today's favourite is *California* by Mr. Bungle. One of my 'stranded on a desert island' records. It is perfect from beginning to end.



AB Records: Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Ricardo:** Kendrick Lamar, *To Pimp a Butterfly*. It's his masterpiece, I think.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **Ricardo:** *The Last Waltz* at The Winterland Ballroom in San Francisco in 1976. I was one month old, my parents hitchhiked to the show, I dozed in a basket hanging from my mom's shoulder the whole night.

AB Records: Loudest gig as an audience member? **Ricardo:** Back in the day, Zen Guerrilla, the late, great psychedelic delta blues punk band, played a scorching set at the Bottom of the Hill in San Francisco. They did a cover of 'Moonage Daydream' that melted my face off and turned me on to David Bowie, for which I am eternally grateful. I was working as a telemarketer at the time. At work the next day, I couldn't hear the people I

was calling to bother on the phone due to the ringing in my ears and had to fake being sick to go home. It was totally worth it. **AB Records:** Style icon? **Ricardo:** For the Modus project I guess I take my lead from wizards and mystical weirdos mixed with dusty troubadours in dark saloons. Perhaps if Nick Cave and Rasputin had a baby and handed him a megaphone.

AB Records: Favourite film? **Ricardo:** *It's a Wonderful Life*. That may not be the most punk rock choice I realise, but I've probably seen it more than any other film. Only in the original black and white of course. It may sound corny but there's a simple magic in that story that never ebbs for me. I don't have to wait for Christmas, I'll gladly watch that thing in the heat of July. **AB Records:** Favourite TV show? **Ricardo:** The last show that really affected me was a short animated series on Netflix called *The Midnight Gospel*. It is a difficult show to describe, but the dialogue, the animation, and the themes run the gamut of profane humour, deep thought, profound spiritual and emotional longing, and some great original songs, one of which 'Used to Mean Freedom to Me', I adapted and recorded on *Memento Mori*.

AB Records: Favourite up and coming artist? **Ricardo:** A tough choice, but I would have to go with The Secret Emchy Society. Cindy Emch is the queen of queer country and I have never met someone who works harder making fantastic original music, with more grace and integrity. She is doing big things and I can't wait to see her take over the world.

The Past is Over

The sun-soaked independent music scene of California has struck gold once again with the emergence of Alameda's **BAY STATION**. Centring around the twin creative talents of key players Kwame Copeland and Deborah Crooks, this collective of likeminded Americana compatriots create something captivating and enduring for rootsy music fans. 2023's *Shapeshifter* EP is a quintessential example of this, a brilliant yet short collection that covers so much ground, expanding and evolving throughout. 2021's *Beyond the Safe and Sound* is further testimony, tapping into such Americana greats as Tom Petty, Alejandro Escovedo, Wilco, and many more. With live commitments approaching at The Fireside Lounge in Alameda, California, Kwame and Deborah took a brief respite to chat with *Aldora Britain Records* about their Bay Station adventures so far. We discussed a selection of their recorded output, popular original compositions, their growth and evolution as a band, and much, much more. That exclusive in-depth conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

If you enjoy this content, please consider making a small, magazine-sized donation at the following link: <https://paypal.me/aldorabritainrecords>. Thank you!

Aldora Britain Records: Hello Deborah and Kwame, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such fantastic artists from over in California. It is amazing how music can bring us together. Let's start off by traveling back in time, and let's go to the very beginning of your creative journey. What are some of your earliest musical memories and what was it that first pushed you towards pursuing this passion of yours?

Deborah Crooks: I grew up listening to a lot of music and making up songs while riding my bike in the driveway. I really loved that there was a song on the radio about bikes, 'Bicycle Race' by Queen, which was completely relatable to my kid's existence. That gave me the idea early that songwriting was something I could do too, even if I didn't take it on until well into adulthood. Hearing Shawn Colvin's early recordings was a big a-ha. Kwame grew up in a musical household and was playing guitar and forming bands from a young age. He moved to California from Wyoming with his band and while that project broke up soon after the move, he never stopped playing and writing.

Aldora Britain Records: And now, let's take a leap forward to the present and a brilliant project of yours out of Alameda, California. The early days and beginnings of Bay Station must have been an invigorating and exhilarating time. How did it come to be? How did you meet the other members and what was the initial spark that brought you all together on a creative and musical level? It has certainly led to some exceptional musical output since!

Deborah Crooks: Kwame and I initially met at a popular open mic at The Bazaar Cafe in San Francisco. Shortly afterward, we met again as part of a group of songwriters that met every few weeks to workshop their latest songs. At that time, we both had our solo projects and Kwame was also playing guitar or bass in a couple of other bands. Soon he was playing in my band. Over time that evolved, I moved to Alameda and we started writing together to see what that would be like. We were having fun with it and it grew into its own thing which is now Bay Station. Around the same time, we met songwriter and guitarist Steve Waters playing in Berkeley, liked his playing soon after, and asked him to join the band as well.

Aldora Britain Records: In 2023, you released an exceptional EP in the form of *Shapeshifter*. I have actually just discovered this record over on Bandcamp, but it has made such a strong impression already. What are your

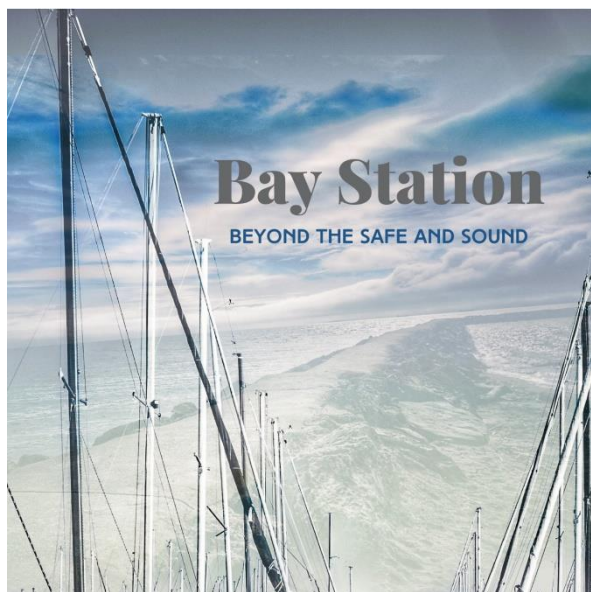


“I moved to Alameda and we started writing together to see what that would be like. We were having fun with it and it grew into its own thing which is now Bay Station.”

memories from writing, recording and releasing this set, and is there anything that you would edit or change looking back with the benefit of hindsight?

Deborah Crooks: We had written the title track and ‘The Past is Over’ a little after releasing our *Beyond the Safe and Sound* EP, so in some ways these two songs are a bookend to that project. The songs on *Beyond the Safe and Sound* were heavily influenced by the pandemic years, and living in California where we were increasingly aware of climate change threats and realities including drought, flooding, sea level rise, and increased wildfires. While we’ve been out of the wildfire zone, smoke from fires in other parts of the state were sending smoke into our area throughout the pandemic so things were really heavy for a while. ‘The Past is Over’ and ‘Shapeshifter’ were written when things were starting to lighten up again and we were enjoying having them in the set. We wanted to get these two songs out but we didn’t have a full record’s worth of material together quite yet. At the same time we had been including Kwame’s song ‘To the Bears’, and Steve’s ‘Three Days of Rain’ in our live set for several years and decided it would make sense to put them on the next record.

In hindsight maybe we would have put some of these songs on *Beyond the Safe and Sound* and saved a couple for the new full-length work we're working on, but you know the past is over!



Aldora Britain Records: It is a truly stellar record, but I would like to pick out two personal favourites. Let’s go for ‘To the Bears’ and ‘Three Days of Rain’. For each, what is the story behind the song, and can you remember the moment it came to be? Did anything in particular inspire them and what do they mean to you as the writer and performer?

Deborah Crooks: Steve wrote ‘Three Days of Rain’ after visiting Point Reyes toward the end of California’s most severe drought on record, which stretched from 2012 to 2016. The forecast of rain was so welcome at that point and this song celebrates that event and what it means to the place we call home. Kwame wrote ‘To the Bears’ in 2014. There had been reports of bears breaking into people’s cabins. At the same time the political situation was tense and the wildfires were increasing and he was thinking of all the ways humans had messed with the environment. Considering how humans had failed at preserving the environment, he thought the world would be a lot better in general if the animals were in charge. He said, ‘Okay, it’s time to leave California to the bears,’ and ran with that line. We all have such an admiration for the natural world and animals, and both of these songs express aspects of that and are very satisfying to perform.

Aldora Britain Records: Previously, if we travel back to 2021, you unveiled another impeccable EP called *Beyond the Safe and Sound*. This was my introduction to your music, so I look back on it very fondly. How do you reflect on this set as a whole now, and how would you say you have grown and evolved as an artist since its initial release back then?

Deborah Crooks: *Beyond the Safe and Sound* was really about the uncertainty of living amid a pandemic and climate change. *Shapeshifter* captures the spirit of expanding out of the constrictions of lockdown and realising, given the existential threats, how important it is to maintain hope and take action where one can. A lot of personal reflection took place during 2020 and 2021 amid the pandemic, protests, and living with the uncertainty we faced

“Shapeshifter captures the spirit of expanding out of the constrictions of lockdown and realising, given the existential threats, how important it is to maintain hope and take action where one can.”

during the 2020 election. A couple of us are Buddhists and we’ve thought a lot about cause and effect and what it would take to have a more peaceful society and ‘Shapeshifter’ expresses some of those ideas. Likewise, ‘The Past is Over’ is a more personal take on leaving the past mistakes in the rearview and attempting to love without fear. Overall, our co-writing process has become more fluid, as concerned with current events as personal. We’re always trying to grow as people and artists.

Aldora Britain Records: As you well know by now, I love the Bay Station sound and your approach to making music. Roots, rock, Americana, blues, it is all in there and more. How would you say this style of yours came about, what goes into it for you, and who are some of your biggest influences and inspirations as a band currently?

Deborah Crooks: It’s really a confluence of our various influences and sensibilities. We both grew up listening to rock and rollers who have a lyrical bent and still do, Petty and Dylan, The Pretenders, The Band, and Wilco were earlier influences. Jason Isbell, Alejandro Escovedo, and Lucinda Williams are inspirations. I also love Feist and we just saw a great Hurray for the Ruff Raff and Norah Jones show. We’re pretty wide-ranging in our tastes and some of our influences may be less obvious. Kwame spent years focusing on learning the dobro. For a time, I was travelling to India every few years to study yoga where I also took classical Indian singing lessons! We have both given a lot of our time to making songs, it’s just what we do whatever the outcome.

Aldora Britain Records: A broad question to finish. We have been through such a unique time in history over the last few years. Both politically and within society, and that is before you throw in the pandemic. How have the last several years impacted on you personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both for the good and the bad? I am curious to hear your insights.

Deborah Crooks: I answered some of this before arriving at this specific question! I never know what to say about the music industry specifically. Recording tools, streaming, social media have all made music easier to make and distribute, so folks can discover something new at any time and find any sort of entertainment they like... without leaving home. Real live music may be a foreign concept for a lot of people. It’s possible to find and listen to music cheaply and listeners may forget there are real humans making it who should be compensated fairly.



“While I wouldn’t pass up the opportunity, we’ve become less attached to the idea of touring because it can be difficult to sustain both life on the road and a steady roof over one’s head.”

What we’re living through right now has affected us on every level. As I already mentioned, our subject matter has definitely changed. We have a new song we’re currently recording called ‘The Times We’re In’. While I wouldn’t pass up the opportunity, we’ve become less attached to the idea of touring because it can be difficult to sustain both life on the road and a steady roof over one’s head. Climate wise, it’s also maybe not always the best idea. Nonetheless, we’re more committed than ever to being artists, and making the best original music we can. We feel fortunate to be where we’re at and able to keep creating.

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist? **Kwame:** We’ll say Gillian Welch and David Rawlings because everything they do is well considered and impeccably played.

AB Records: Favourite album? **Deborah:** I will say Gillian Welch, *Time (The Revelator)*. **Kwame:** I love Wilco’s *Sky Blue Sky*.

AB Records: Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Deborah:** Maggie Rogers, *Don’t Forget Me*.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **Deborah:** Tom Petty. **Kwame:** ZZ Top.

AB Records: Loudest gig as an audience member? **Kwame:** Sonic Youth at The Cow Palace in San Francisco.

AB Records: Style icon? **Deborah:** Patti Smith, because she keeps it simple, sustainable, and gives no fucks.

AB Records: Favourite film? **Kwame:** We were both stymied on this so we’ll pass!

AB Records: Favourite TV show? **Kwame:** I am currently really into *For All Mankind*. **Deborah:** We’re also fans of *Ted Lasso*.

AB Records: Favourite up and coming artist? **Deborah:** Think they may have arrived really, but as far as up and coming in my ears, I’ve been enjoying Katie Crutchfield’s project Waxahatchee and Anna Tivel’s recent albums.



BOTH PHOTOGRAPHS FEATURED ARE CREDITED TO PHOTO SAM.

Voice of a Jukebox

MANDY WOODS is a troubadouring modern-day singer-songwriter with transatlantic roots. Following a decade spent in the musically rich surroundings of Austin, Texas, Mandy now resides in the scenic climes of Somerset, England. This movement and freewheeling spirit are reflected gloriously in her creative output. Whether it be a track with country and Americana leanings, or a composition that embraces a love of British folk music, Mandy brings it to life with a seamless ease, offering up an honest and relatable undercurrent to all her performances and recordings. These enticing foundations are showcased brilliantly on outings such as 2023's stellar and aptly titled *Free Spirited Like Me*. As this LP passes its first anniversary, Mandy took some time out to reflect with *Aldora Britain Records* on her songwriting journey to date. We discussed popular original compositions, her growth and evolution as a musician, big influences and inspirations, and much, much more. That exclusive in-depth conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

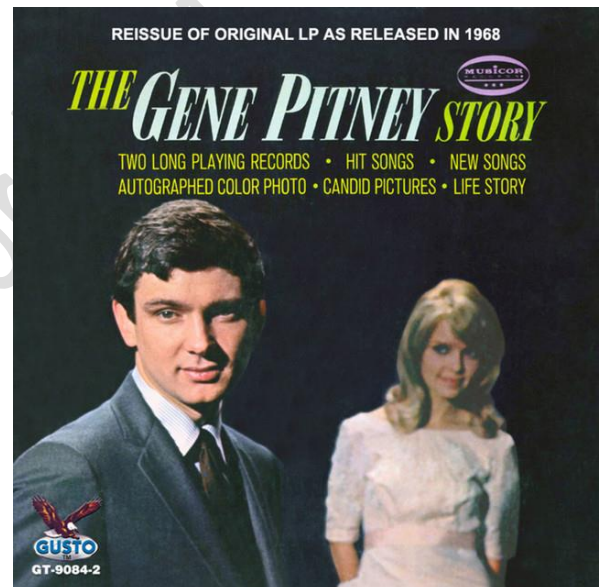
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Aldora Britain Records: Hello Mandy, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic artist from Glastonbury. It is amazing how music can bring us together. Let's start off by travelling back in time. What are some of your earliest musical memories and what was it that first pushed you towards pursuing this passion of yours?

Mandy Woods: Hi Tom! Thank you so much for putting together such a thought-provoking set of questions that have really made me dig deep! Here goes with some answers. No one else in my family was musical, but for me there was always, from a very early age, an absolute fascination with certain types of music, along with a desire to make music myself and one day be known for it. I remember being totally drawn in, as a seven or eight year old, by Gene Pitney's 'Something's Gotten Hold of My Heart', the words had a mystery, I think at that age I didn't understand exactly what it was that had gotten hold of his heart, and his unique voice had a passion that I found really compelling. I've also loved writing from a very young age. I'd write poems on 'Mandy-made cards' to my mum, and at thirteen undertook my first co-write, of a 'humorous' country song, 'Knock-Kneed Nell', this was long before political correctness, with a friend at school when we were putting together a form concert for the rest of the school.

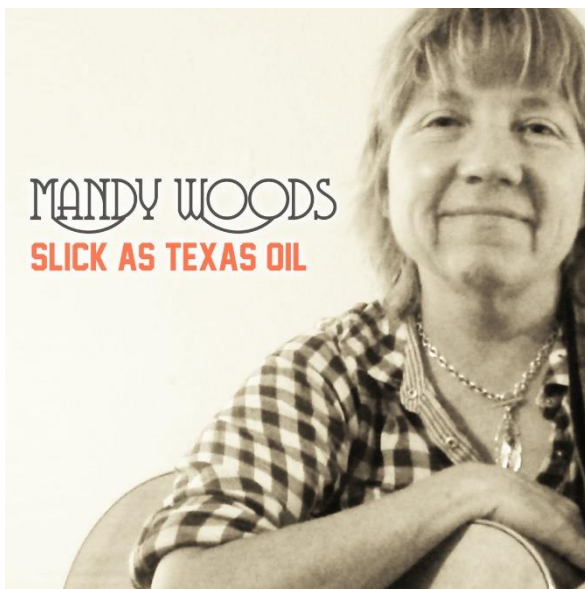
I asked my parents for a guitar for my ninth birthday and remember having an absolute fascination with that instrument and with a guitar catalogue that I'd pore through for hours. And as a teen I fell in love with the Fender Rhodes electric piano sound and became determined to own a 'Piano-Mate', a very 1970s gadget that fitted across the keyboard of a standard piano so that it could produce a sound akin to the theme tune from *Taxi*! When I went on a school trip to the Ideal Home Exhibition with my class as a thirteen or fourteen year old, while the other girls were visiting kitchen gadget stands and the like, I headed straight for the Piano-Mate booth. I never did acquire one though!

Aldora Britain Records: And now, let's take a leap forward to the present day and your impressive solo output. I am really drawn in by your impeccable songwriting and songcraft. How do you approach this part of your process? Are you drawn to particular themes or topics? Perhaps coming from a personal, observational, or even fictional perspective?



“When I spent a decade in Austin, Texas in the 1990s I fell in love with country music and Americana, drawn in by the storytelling element that is such a big part of both genres.”

Mandy Woods: I’ve always been a natural storyteller. It just seems to be the way my creative mind works. And so when I spent a decade in Austin, Texas in the 1990s I fell in love with country music and Americana, drawn in by the storytelling element that is such a big part of both genres. My songs recount stories, some of them real life stories. ‘My Companion of the Road’ took me twenty-six years to write as it tells the very sad true story of the theft of my beloved Ovation guitar from the long distance bus I travelled on when I made my way down to Austin to live there in 1990. There’s admittedly some artistic license used in the song. I don’t know for sure who stole the guitar, so why not, for the purposes of the song, make it the very dodgy cowboy who boarded the bus at Memphis? Perfect for a country song! ‘At 23’ is closely based on something that happened to a friend, and it does seem to be a theme that others relate to. That is, an ex from very long ago suddenly getting in touch again out of the blue and very unrealistically and insensitively hinting at getting back together.



Some other songs are pure fiction but incorporate elements of my life or observations of the world around me. This is particularly true for the comedic songs, such as ‘Pragmatic Love Song’. The unromantic character is based on someone I knew years ago, for whom tact as a concept didn’t seem to exist. They would call a spade a spade, regardless of how uncomfortable it made those around them feel. Imagining them romantically involved with someone at the other end of the spectrum, with their head in the clouds and their language full of hearts and flowers, led to the song, that has to be performed as a conversation to make any sense, so I have to use two different accents to differentiate between the two characters.

My mother was a very enthusiastic and skilled amateur actress and played a wide variety of characters with all sorts of different regional accents. As a teenager I’d sit in the kitchen reading scripts with her as she memorised her lines, and for one play, *The Happiest Days of Your Life*, when one cast member dropped out, I was roped at the last minute into playing a Scottish schoolgirl, fairly effortlessly slipping into the role and the accent! I think that’s really helped me in my performance technique. I really love totally getting into a song and becoming the characters I’m singing about, whether they’re real or made up.

I don’t approach songwriting as a kind of office job where I sit down at my desk every morning and set out to come up with another song, and then think of something to write about. It’s much more that a phrase or a situation grabs hold of me and in that instant I know it’s going to be a song. ‘There’s a song in that!’ is a frequently heard expression in my house! The closest I come to the ‘office job’ approach is occasionally writing to a set theme or prompt. Watford Folk Club has an annual folk song competition, with a different theme each year. Last year’s was ‘fools and fooling’, and within an hour I had virtually finished ‘That Cheatin’ Line’. It’s not taken from a direct experience, but the storyline seems to be a familiar one for many.

It received such positive feedback when I performed the song that I decided not to hold it back for another six months until the deadline of the song competition was reached, I’m not that patient, but instead to put it on the new album. I then wrote another song to the same theme, but with a very different feel, much more folk driven, and put that in for the competition instead. It wasn’t placed in the competition, but I like the song and feel glad I got two decent songs out of it. ‘Decent’ meaning that I like to perform them!

“My albums have always happened in a rather organic way rather than me sitting down one day and deciding to start writing for the next one. During lockdown I wrote a lot, and didn’t stop once ‘normal’ life resumed.”

Aldora Britain Records: In 2023, you released a superb LP in the form of *Free Spirited Like Me*. This album has such a standout place in my record collection already. What are your memories from writing, recording and releasing this set, and is there anything that you would edit or change looking back with the benefit of hindsight?

Mandy Woods: My albums have always happened in a rather organic way rather than me sitting down one day and deciding to start writing for the next one. During lockdown I wrote a lot, and didn’t stop once ‘normal’ life resumed, and by early 2023 I realised that I’d got enough new material since *Cabin Fever* to think about putting out a new album.



There were also a few songs from the past that I wanted to include. I wrote ‘Indian Summer’ in 1986 or ’87, and although I had recorded it a few times previously, I wanted a contemporary recording that honoured it as one of the very early songs that put me on the road to where I am now. I’ve sung that song so very many times over the years and have a bit of a love-hate relationship with it. People seem to love it, but I really hope it’s not the song I end up being remembered by! But I can’t ignore the part it’s played in my life as a singer-songwriter over the years.

I included ‘Trail of Goodbyes’, even though there’s also a version on *Cabin Fever*, as the theme is a very important one for me. It sums up my rather nomadic existence, and I feel it’s a very honest song, but I wasn’t entirely happy with some elements of the arrangement of the version on *Cabin Fever*, so I wanted another crack at it! My friend Marty Ratcliffe put down a great bassline on the new version, and I took a lot more trouble getting it exactly right this time.

I wanted to put my harmonica playing a bit more in the spotlight this time too. I started playing harmonica in 1985 when I was living in the Blue Ridge Mountains, working as a volunteer in a therapeutic community. I’m so glad now that I decided I was going to learn to play harp back then as it’s become part of my sound and style. I absolutely love playing blues harp. I’m not sure where that came from as I certainly didn’t grow up listening to the blues, but it does feel very natural to me. So, harp does feature on quite a few of the tracks on *Free Spirited Like Me*. I did consider having a wailing lead guitar solo on ‘At 23’, as the song that my friend played on repeat that is referred to in it was ‘How Long’ by Ace, which features a very 70s electric guitar break! But in the end I went for harp as that is much more my sound, and to me that was more important.

I’m still not sure whether I was right to include ‘Pragmatic Love Song’ on the album as it’s so different from everything else on there, but I did want to put something on with a comedic element, and audiences seem to love it when I perform it live, so it felt like the right choice at the time!

Aldora Britain Records: It is a pearl of a record from top to bottom, but I would like to focus on the opening tracks, ‘Table for Two’ and ‘The Possibility of You’. For each, what is the story behind the song, and can you remember the moment it came to be? Did anything in particular inspire them and what do they mean to you as the writer?

Mandy Woods: ‘Table for Two’ is the song that perhaps most obviously owes its existence to my years in Austin, as during my years there I came to love everything about American diners, from their chrome décor to the steaming stacks of buttermilk pancakes and maple syrup, to their seating arrangements with convivial groups of

“I feel very proud of the song and the production. And it does reflect how I’ve lived my life, and the fact that Carol and I both love travelling and taking to the road at a moment’s notice in our campers!”

friends sitting around tables, oblivious to the solitary folk perched on their lonely stools up at the counter, the inspiration for the song. I spent many a late morning enjoying brunch in The Omelettry in North Austin, and to this day that place comes to mind when I sing the song. The story, to my cousin’s disappointment, is fiction, but the setting lent itself to a love-gone-wrong song, and writing it as a sad waltz seemed appropriate too. I’m extremely glad I delayed releasing the album until Martin Froud was back from Canada and able to come over and put down those wonderful lap steel parts on ‘Table for Two’ and ‘Voice of a Jukebox’. If any song benefits from the heart-rending tumbleweed twang of a well-played lap steel, it’s ‘Table for Two’!

‘The Possibility of You’ happened rather spontaneously. In September 2022, my partner Carol and I were on a motorhome road trip to Austria to visit my aunt in Innsbruck, and during the long journey through France and Germany I started writing a travel based song, one about needing to be on the road yet still hoping to meet a likeminded soul. It was obvious to Carol that I was writing something even though I was quite tight-lipped about it, as I didn’t really know how it was going to end up. So, I’d just say, ‘Oh, nothing...’, whenever she’d ask me what I was writing. So, we called it ‘The Nothing Song’ for a while! The melody went through a few iterations too, starting out bluesy, but that didn’t sit quite right, and so I kept playing around with different chords and patterns until the evocative Em7 leapt out as the right opening chord, and it just flowed from there.

During lockdown I became involved in several Zoom based music sessions, and one in particular became, and continues to be, very influential for me. It’s The Dun Cow Session, hosted by Wendy Parker, that sprang out of the Monday live music night at The Dun Cow Inn in Houghton-le-Spring near Durham. Although the live sessions have resumed, the virtual one has kept going as it’s become a wonderful international community of musicians and friends. And it was through the VOM that I met Bert Louissen, a Dutch musician living in that area of the Northeast UK. He plays absolutely wonderful piano, and I felt that was what was needed in ‘Possibility’, so I asked him if he’d come up with a piano accompaniment for the song. I also met Kenny Jobson through The Dun Cow Sessions, and he and Bert are great friends, so he agreed to record Bert’s piano part, and then help me produce the song, that I then released as a single.



It was nominated for the 2024 FAB Music Awards as ‘Best Original Song’, and I feel very proud of the song and the production. And it does reflect how I’ve lived my life, and the fact that Carol and I both love travelling and taking to the road at a moment’s notice in our campers!

Aldora Britain Records: Previously, if we travel back to 2021, you unveiled a COVID era masterpiece entitled *Cabin Fever*. This was actually my introduction to your music, so I look back on it very fondly. How do you reflect on this set as a whole now, and how would you say you have grown and evolved as an artist since its initial release?

Mandy Woods: I felt that recording and releasing an album during lockdown would not only be a very productive use of all that free time, but would also be something to mark such a unique era in all our lives. I had written the song ‘Cabin Fever’

the previous year, when Carol and I spent the winter in the South of France. Although wintering on the Côte d’Azur sounded like a wonderful thing to do, the reality was that I got bored and restless quite quickly, as my A-level

“I felt that recording and releasing an album during lockdown would not only be a very productive use of all that free time, but would also be something to mark such a unique era in all our lives.”

French had long since vanished and I became aware of how much I rely on being able to communicate fluently in my everyday life. Also, there were very few opportunities to play music. So, ‘Cabin Fever’ came out of that, but little did I know how apt the title would be a year later when we were all languishing in lockdown!

The album is much more raw and rustic than *Free Spirited Like Me*, but that feels appropriate for the spirit in which it was recorded, and although it could have been a bit tighter and tidier, I like it as it is, and I took what I learned from releasing *Cabin Fever* and applied it to *Free Spirited*, which was mastered by my friend James Arter, a recording engineer I first met when I had the chance to record two songs at a studio in Soho in 2016. James was definitely the highlight of that experience, and he really gets my music and where I’m coming from, so I totally trust him when it comes to mastering.

Aldora Britain Records: As you well know, I love the Mandy Woods sound and your approach to making music. Americana, country, singer-songwriter, it is all in there. How would you say this style of yours came about, what goes into it for you, and who are some of your biggest influences and inspirations as an artist and performer?

Mandy Woods: Although I was writing and performing songs before I lived in Austin, my decade there was definitely very influential. Not only was there a wonderful coffeehouse culture in Austin at that time, there was also a great women’s music scene that I became thoroughly involved in. It was also a golden era for country music and for female singer-songwriters, and Nanci Griffith and Mary Chapin Carpenter as songwriters and Trisha Yearwood with her wonderful vocal skills were among my biggest influences from that time. Gretchen Peters is another songwriter I greatly admire, ‘On a Bus to St. Cloud’ is so beautifully and skilfully written.



Being introduced to the three-string partial capo was also very influential in helping create and cement my sound as I use it to create both a DADGAD type tuning, as in ‘Table for Two’, and an open-chord tuning, as in ‘My Companion of the Road’. As I’ve already mentioned, the narrative element is very important for me in writing songs, they are very lyric based, and for me the melody is there to enhance the story, rather than the words merely fitting into the metre of an already existing tune. The lyrics come first, and I’ll have a trite tune in my head that I’ll fit the lyrics to so that they’re absolutely tight, and then once I’m happy with the lyrics, I discard the trite tune and sit with the words for as long as it takes for the ‘right’ melody to form itself around them. The whole ‘Western style’ thing sits very comfortably with me. Again, I’m not sure why, but again it probably stems from my decade in Texas, and I feel it works for the kind of music I’m making.

Aldora Britain Records: A broad question to finish. We have been through such a unique time in history over the last few years. Both politically and within society, and that is before you throw in the pandemic. How have the last several years impacted on you personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both for the good and the bad? I am curious to hear your insights.

Mandy Woods: Difficult as the pandemic was for many people, I found the Zoom based music sessions that blossomed through lockdown invaluable for networking, both in the UK and further afield. In these deeply divisive political times I feel there’s a need to be more open and honest about where one stands as an artist, and

“Maybe, in fact, for me the journey is everything when it comes down to it, to arrive at an end point and then have nothing left to achieve, where would the thrill be in that, what incentive would there be then?”

the issue of homelessness is one I feel particularly drawn to and concerned about. In terms of getting music out there, the music industry has changed completely from the chart based singles era where the goal was to be signed by a record label. Putting music out digitally is within the scope of many more musicians, but very few of them make enough to even buy a cup of coffee with, let alone make a decent living from, so I think ‘success’ or ‘fame’ or whatever you want to call it is very much more fleeting today for most. But for me, the journey has been remarkable, unique and fantastic, and I’m proud of the winding and varied road I’ve travelled. Maybe, in fact, for me the journey is everything when it comes down to it, to arrive at an end point and then have nothing left to achieve, where would the thrill be in that, what incentive would there be then?

It’s obvious from my influences that I’m very drawn to other women performers and songwriters, and I really cherished being part of the Austin women’s music scene in the 1990s. But that’s not to say it’s always been easy being a female singer-songwriter in a generally very male dominated world. The UK folk and acoustic scene has many more male singer-guitarists than women doing the equivalent. Four decades on from teaching myself to play the harmonica and subsequently developing my own style, I’m fairly used to being told how I ‘should’ be playing it by men who by their own admission have never even touched the instrument but know how Bob Dylan played it. The best piece of advice I was ever given about stepping up a notch in the music business came from a very dear musician friend, a man, who told me I needed to get hold of the very best guitar I could afford.

He was absolutely right, and having grown to love small-bodied guitars, I now mainly play a parlour sized Larrivee and a Brook, fantastic Devon based luthiers, ‘Little Silver’ travel guitar with, unusually, fourteen frets to the neck. While they are both gorgeous guitars, no matter how fabulous an instrument is, it doesn’t play itself. Yet I’ve lost count of how many times men, and it is always men, have come up to me after a performance to wax lyrical about the beautiful sound of my guitar but say nothing about my playing of it! I do think women are still very much in the shadow of male artists, and that we need to be twice as good as them to be valued half as much. That is quite frustrating, but it gives me something to keep striving for, and that in the end is what keeps me going and the adrenaline flowing! I’m delighted that a group of female musicians based in Stroud, Gloucestershire have recently started an initiative called DAMES aimed at promoting female performers, culminating in a concert and open mic in October. I’m involved in it myself, and my hope is that the idea might take off around the country.



Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist? **Mandy:** Early Mary Chapin Carpenter.

AB Records: Favourite album? **Mandy:** *Shooting Straight in the Dark*, 1990.

AB Records: Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Mandy:** Mary Ann McAllister, a US Zoom friend, *Night*.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **Mandy:** New Seekers!

AB Records: Loudest gig as an audience member? **Mandy:** Loudness hasn't ever been a quality that's appealed to me! I've always been much more into gorgeous, subtle harmonies! So, I can't even think of a really loud gig I've ever been to. My hearing has benefited, I'm sure!

AB Records: Style icon? **Mandy:** Doris Day as Calamity Jane!

AB Records: Favourite film? **Mandy:** *Calamity Jane*.

AB Records: Favourite TV show? **Mandy:** I don't watch much TV, but when I do, it's mainly TV quiz shows. I've been on a few myself, following in my father's footsteps!

AB Records: Favourite up and coming artist? **Mandy:** I love Caylee Hammack's 2020 release, 'Small Town Hypocrite', a very honest and well-written story song, just my thing!



Maybe I'll Be Blue for You

Michael McCann is the latest singer-songwriter maverick to emerge from Edinburgh City. Under the collective alias of **THE LOW TIDE**, this Scottish troubadour and an assortment of musician friends delve into the sounds and styles of classic sounding pop music. Key touchstones include the cinematic musings of Scott Walker and the protopunk poetry of Lou Reed. There is an all-original edge at play too, as is gloriously captured on new tracks such as 'Hello Mrs Mack' and 'City Lights', both providing an enticing tease of what is to come from The Low Tide's upcoming full-length *September Rain* record. As the buzz and momentum surrounding this album continues to build, Michael took a short break from his pre-release schedule to chat with *Aldora Britain Records* about his creative journey so far. We discussed big influences and inspirations, the impact of the COVID pandemic, formative musical memories, and much, much more. That exclusive conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

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THE LOW TIDE
September Rain



Aldora Britain Records: Hello Michael, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic artist from up in Edinburgh. Thank you for your time! It is amazing how music can bring us together. Let's start off by rewinding the clocks, and let's go to the very beginning of your creative journey. What are some of your earliest musical memories and what was it that first pushed you towards pursuing this passion of yours?

Michael McCann: Earliest memories for me are The Beatles. My dad played in social clubs when I was young and I heard him playing and learning their tunes.

Aldora Britain Records: And now, let's take a leap forward to your brilliant current project. The beginnings and early days of The Low Tide must have been such an invigorating time. It has certainly led to some fantastic output since. How did it come

to be? What was the initial spark? Is it an outlet for your solo musings or more of a collaborative kind of feel and approach?

Michael McCann: It's a bit of both, solo and collaboration. I'm a bass player really and I'd tried some of the initial ideas with some singers I know unsuccessfully. A piano player I was working with said I should just sing them myself and that was the initial spark.

Aldora Britain Records: I am fast becoming a big fan of The Low Tide. I am definitely drawn in by your impeccable songwriting and songcraft. How do you approach this part of your creative process? Are you drawn to specific themes or topics? Perhaps coming from a personal, observational, or even fictional perspective or point of view?

Michael McCann: I'm easily drawn to the darker side with my lyrics, I'm a big Lou Reed and Scott Walker fan. On the face of things my lyrics are straightforward, however, they have darker undercurrents for sure.

Aldora Britain Records: Let's get more specific now. I would like to chat about two recent compositions of yours, 'Hello Mrs Mack' and 'September Rain'. For each, what is the story behind the song, and can you remember the moment it came to be? Did anything in particular inspire them and what do they mean to you as the writer and artist?

“I’m easily drawn to the darker side with my lyrics, I’m a big Lou Reed and Scott Walker fan. On the face of things my lyrics are straightforward, however, they have darker undercurrents for sure.”

Michael McCann: My songs are about ‘things’ specifically and can also be imagery. ‘September Rain’, I was getting a train and someone had left a bit of paper which I read. It was a psychology scenario about a male in Scandinavia who would woo women, with a view to doing them harm when the rains hit in September. Told you it was dark! ‘Hello Mrs Mack’ is about my old music teacher at high school.

Aldora Britain Records: Both of these tracks are taken from your upcoming studio record, also entitled *September Rain*. I am really looking forward to this release, best of luck with it! What are your memories from writing and recording it, and how would you say you have grown and evolved as an artist throughout this process?

Michael McCann: COVID gave me the time and space to start this record. I took a dozen ideas that had haunted me for some time. It was either a vocal melody, lyric idea, or musical part, and I got the basic feel and mood right before developing each tune with other musicians. It’s been a hard, wonderful process and I’ve learned a lot about songwriting and recording.

Aldora Britain Records: As you well know by now, I love The Low Tide sound and your approach to making and creating music. That classic, easy listening approach to the singer-songwriter field. How would you say this style of yours came about, what goes into it for you, and who are some of your biggest influences and inspirations as an artist currently?

Michael McCann: The music and artists that inspired me are Lou Reed and Scott Walker, however, I’m a big music fan with a wide taste. Kate Bush, Radiohead, The Stranglers, Magazine, early Talking Heads, David Sylvian, Bowie, Iggy Pop, Tom Waits. Film music, Bernard Herrmann, John Barry. Blue jazz and classical.

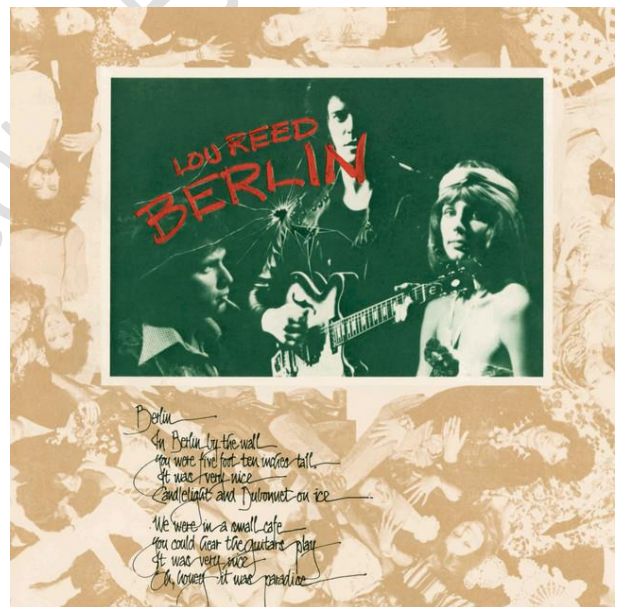
Aldora Britain Records: A broad question to finish. We have been through such a unique time in history over the last few years. Both politically and within society, and that is before you throw in the pandemic. How have the last several years impacted on you personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both for the good and the bad?

Michael McCann: I’ve heard a good few interviews recently with folk saying the same thing about COVID, in that it gave us the time to take a step back and really focus on what really motivates us as an artist. Obviously the conflicts around the world are not great and you do question the motives and desires of some human beings.

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist? **Michael:** Scott Walker. **AB Records:** Favourite album? **Michael:** Lou Reed, *Berlin* and *Transformer*. **AB Records:** Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Michael:** Kraftwerk, *Trans-Europe Express*. **AB Records:** First gig as an audience member? **Michael:** The Sensational Alex Harvey Band. **AB Records:** Loudest gig as an audience member? **Michael:** The Stranglers.

AB Records: Style icon? **Michael:** Early Lou Reed. **AB Records:** Favourite film? **Michael:** *North by Northwest*, Hitchcock. **AB Records:** Favourite TV show? **Michael:** *8 Out of 10 Cats*. **AB Records:** Favourite up and coming artist? **Michael:** Struggling with this one!



Tonight, The Streets Are Ours

Richard Hawley with John Smith at De Montfort Hall, Leicester, Wednesday 5th June 2024

(Featured photography by Dean Chalkley)

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On an average looking evening in Leicester, at the opening of the British summer, Sheffield's unofficial poet laureate **RICHARD HAWLEY** arrived in town. As the informal and recreational matches of cricket and football raged on in the neighbouring city centre greenery of Victoria Park, a different storm brewed within the De Montfort Hall. Here, rock and roll was ready, the be-quiffed rockabilly stylings of Hawley, complete with Roy Orbison shades, and his musical band of brothers prepared, ready for a brilliant evening indulging in their new record, *In This City They Call You Love*, as well as choice picks from their ever-expanding, glorious back-catalogue. The stage was set for a night of chamber pop cinematics, raga rock odysseys, neo-psychedelic flourishes, and worldly lyrical observations. An evening of Sheffield nurtured wonder was in store.



Prior to Hawley and his musical compatriots, travelling troubadour **JOHN SMITH** took to the stage for an altogether different experience. Smith's speciality lays in the indie folk singer-songwriter field. Throughout his set, there were moments of wit, especially with his appealing and humoristic approach, regaling the audience with tales of supporting 'Big' John Martyn in the same venue, misguided ventures into bitcoin trading, and COVID era arguments around the house. Smith pushed himself forward, fully embracing an audience that began as a passive and indifferent mass, ending his portion of the evening with a hearty singalong that perfectly lends itself to his acoustic-based style of music. The highlight was this rousing rendition of 'The Living Kind', the title track of Smith's most recent record, a joyful slice of revelry that sat elegantly alongside other charming and warm outings, as well as beautifully heart-rending and nostalgically longing compositions too.

Following Smith's spirited and worthy opening set, the lights went low and Hawley and his five-man band arrived onstage, beginning with an audacious and exquisitely sprawling rendition of 'She Brings the Sunlight'. This opening number set the tone for Hawley's portion of the evening. With a three-man guitar-wielding frontline creating an impenetrable wall of sound, exceptionally underpinned by a solid foundation of bass, drums and keyboards, this was a statement of intent, a seven-minute psychedelic odyssey, thundering and direct. In these opening moments of Hawley's set, each guitarist was given ample space to shine early in proceedings, with the frontman himself unleashing something otherworldly and mind-bending from his six-string weapon of choice. From the off, the full group displayed a tightknit connectivity and brotherhood.

Offerings such as the murderous, menacing and mysterious 'Two for His Heels' followed in this vein, as did 'Standing at the Sky's Edge', a performance which soared and became a masterful and brash opus, a full-frontal, breath-taking assault on the senses. However, the beauty of Hawley as a musician and performer is his diversity and versatility. Whilst these tracks of rock and roll changed perceptions and radically pushed the set along, there were also moments of reflection with contemplative baroque numbers, these included 'Open Up Your Door', 'Heavy Rain', and new single 'Prism in Jeans', which landed somewhere in-between Roy Orbison's crooning style and Lee Hazlewood's brilliant orchestral nature. The new track 'Deep Space' provided a fantastic surprise highlight with a punchy delivery, a song that truly came into its own up on the live stage. This in turn provided a

“You’re precious to me, like Owen’s poetry, and I wish you well, my heart of oak. When you sang ‘Bay of Biscay’, the whole world it drifted away, and the wind it sighed, through the hearts of oak.”

stellar foundation for such Hawley classics as the bold and driving ‘Alone’, the expertly delivered raga of ‘Leave Your Body Behind You’, the superb monochrome juxtaposition of ‘Don’t Stare at the Sun’, and the soundtrack favourite of ‘Tonight the Streets Are Ours’ (as heard recently in *Baby Reindeer*), exceptionally placed after Hawley’s spot on and fantastically articulated political discourse for the evening.

The audience were invited to rewind time for a composition written by sixteen-year-old Hawley, ‘Just Like the Rain’, a song that glistened and shimmered and testified to this songwriter having always been a self-proclaimed ‘miserable f****r’. The rock and roll overload of ‘Is There a Pill?’ and the anthemic, poetic crescendo and swansong of ‘Heart of Oak’ closed the main set. Before long, however, Hawley returned with a reduced band to perform ‘People’, the central point of the new record, *In This City They Call You Love*, paving the way for the euphoric full-band rockabilly shuffle of ‘I’m Looking for Someone to Find Me’, and the expansive closer ‘The Ocean’. Throughout the set, Hawley and his band delivered a rare modern-day rock and roll spectacle, complete with reflective introspection and contrasting total freakout moments. More than that, this was a career spanning set, with newbies and oldies perfectly interplaying, and that is a testament to Richard Hawley, a poetic rock and roller who is here to stay, an artist whose music will endure long after we have all faded away.

Setlist

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1) She Brings the Sunlight | 11) Coles Corner |
| 2) Two for His Heels | 12) Leave Your Body Behind You |
| 3) Prism in Jeans | 13) Heavy Rain |
| 4) Open Up Your Door | 14) Don’t Stare at the Sun |
| 5) Standing at the Sky’s Edge | 15) Is There a Pill? |
| 6) Deep Space | 16) Heart of Oak |
| 7) Just Like the Rain | |
| 8) Hear That Lonesome Whistle Blow | 17) People |
| 9) Tonight the Streets Are Ours | 18) I’m Looking for Someone to Find Me |
| 10) Alone | 19) The Ocean |



Floating in Sound

Innovation and experimentation, these are the quintessential cornerstones of **MOVING COIL**'s output. Based out of Portugal, this alternative outlet allows Luis Couto the space to express himself without limits. This has led to the creation of a fantastically freewheeling and ever-roaming canon of music, straying naturally and with ease into the realms of post-punk, electronica, psychedelia, post-rock, and many more. A fine example of this ethos and approach came by way of the *Songs from Confinement* record, or even the *Shoot the Breeze* offering from 2021, each displaying opposing yet complementing snapshots of the Moving Coil universe. More recently, during a brief respite from his current musical activities, Luis sat down for a chat with *Aldora Britain Records*. We discussed the lasting impact of the COVID pandemic, early and formative creative memories, the beginnings of the Moving Coil project, and much, much more. That exclusive in-depth conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

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Aldora Britain Records: Hello Luis, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic artist from over in Portugal. It is amazing how music can bring us together. Let's start off by travelling back in time. What are some of your earliest musical memories and what was it that first pushed you towards pursuing this passion of yours?

Luis Couto: I'm fine, thanks! Well, one day I found my school notebooks from elementary school and found there lists with my top songs. So, very early, like seven years old, I was quite into music. When my best friend from childhood started playing a very basic synth I also got very interested into playing music and soon got one synth for myself. I even had Hammond organ lessons. But soon I realised that I preferred to create my own music than to play the other's music, which was kind of boring to me. When I was 16 I switched the synth for an electric

guitar. I was lucky to discover different music very early, as a friend of a friend of my sister used to go to the UK and brought with him records that one couldn't find in the Azores at that time. That's how I came to know many artists very early that otherwise I wouldn't have been able to hear. Artists like R.E.M., Adrian Borland, The Jesus and Mary Chain, and so on.

Aldora Britain Records: And now, let's take a leap forward to a creative project of yours. The beginnings and early days of Moving Coil must have been such an invigorating time. How did it come to be? What was the initial spark? Is it an outlet for your solo musings or more of a collaborative kind of feel and approach?

Luis Couto: I was the vocalist in a punk rock and post-punk band, and when the band dissolved I wanted to continue to make music. By 1998 a friend of mine taught me how to record using a computer. It was quite an adventure to record with the equipment I had at my disposal, an electric guitar that didn't sound well, a cheap microphone, and an amp that a friend lent me. It took lots of time to do anything and it didn't like I wished for, but it was amazing to record my own songs at home. Many times, I had local musicians in the small room that I turned into a studio. They would collaborate on Moving Coil and I would record their bands and projects. It was a great time!

Aldora Britain Records: Earlier this year, you unveiled a stellar LP in the form of *Songs from Confinement*. I have just discovered this outing over on Bandcamp, but it has made a strong impression already. What are your

“By 1998 a friend of mine taught me how to record using a computer. It was quite an adventure to record with the equipment I had at my disposal, an electric guitar that didn’t sound well, a cheap microphone, and an amp that a friend lent me.”

memories from writing, recording and releasing this set, and how would you say you have grown and evolved since your earlier output?

Luis Couto: As the title suggests this album was written during the COVID-19 times. I had a lot more free time since I was working from home. It was also a time when I returned to synths, but still using a lot of guitars. Musically, it was a period of transition, since lately I have been using more synths, mostly analogue, than guitars, but also a period of growing musically, reaching maturity. I had time to study more musical theory and that possibly made some difference. This album was recorded from 2020 or 2021 to early 2023. I had so much unreleased material from that period, not only under the Moving Coil moniker, that I had decided to release only in digital, through Bandcamp and streaming platforms.

When I started recording as Moving Coil the equipment I had was very limited, as I was a penniless college student. Right now I have a decent home studio that enables me to realise the ideas I have in my head. And of course, many years writing songs, playing improvised music with other fellow musicians, and being involved in different musical projects made me grow a lot as a musician.

Aldora Britain Records: It is a gem of an album from top to bottom, but I would like to pick out two personal favourites. Let’s go for ‘Counting Days to See the Sun’ and ‘Scarlet Woman’. For each, what is the story behind the song, and can you remember the moment it came to be? Did anything in particular inspire them and what do they mean to you as the writer?

Luis Couto: ‘Counting the Days to See the Sun’ was written when, where I live, we were under curfew at weekends. No one could leave home from 3 p.m. onwards, not even for shopping. So, the best thing I had to do with all that time at home was to write and record songs. It’s a song about those grim times, with some hope that things would get better, but acknowledging that nothing would ever be the same. And I really think that society in general got worse after the pandemic.

When I wrote ‘Scarlet Woman’ I was reading about Aleister Crowley and Jack Parsons, so the title and words like ‘Babylon’ are direct references to their magical meanderings. I always had some interest in the occult and esotericism, though I don’t have a special interest in Aleister Crowley or Jack Parsons.

Aldora Britain Records: Previously, if we travel back to 2021, you released another superb record called *Shoot the Breeze*. This was my introduction to your music, so I look back on it especially fondly. How do you reflect on this set as a whole now, and is there anything that you would edit or change looking back with the benefit of hindsight?

Luis Couto: That is the album I wanted to make for a long time but didn’t have the equipment nor the knowledge to make. Before the first and this second life of Moving Coil, I was playing either neo-folk music or free improvisation, so it marks my definitive return to indie rock and Moving Coil. I recorded some songs for compilations in between. I’m never completely happy with any work that’s finished, it’s that dissatisfaction that keeps me going. To be honest, I’m proud of some songs there, but not of every song.



“I’m never completely happy with any work that’s finished, it’s that dissatisfaction that keeps me going. To be honest, I’m proud of some songs there, but not of every song.”

Aldora Britain Records: As you well know by now, I love the Moving Coil sound and your approach to making music. Post-rock, psychedelia, alternative, indie rock, it is all in there and more. How would you say this style of yours came about, what goes into it for you, and who are some of your biggest influences and inspirations as an artist currently?

Luis Couto: It came naturally. I don’t think about music genres when I’m creating music. I love many different kinds of music, indie rock, shoegaze, psychedelia, folk music, industrial, IDM, hauntology, krautrock, and even classical and avant-garde music. Somehow all the things that I listen to make their way into the music I make. Most of the time I grab a musical instrument, improvise, and sometimes some chords or sounds attract me and I start to develop a song from there. Usually, the melodies just appear in my head out of nowhere. It’s usual to sing to my phone the bassline or the lead guitar before I have time to properly record it! I’ve been listening to many different artists lately. Some names, Stereolab, Spiritualized, Labradford, artists from the Ghost Box label, Boards of Canada, Kraftwerk, and a lot of ambient music.

Aldora Britain Records: A broad question to finish. We have been through such a unique time in history over the last few years. Both politically and within society, and that is before you throw in the pandemic. How have the last several years impacted on you personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both for the good and the bad? I am curious to hear your insights.

Luis Couto: It was never so easy to make music, people just grab some samples and the computer software fits and fixes tempos and notes. But it sounds all so plastic and derivative. I’m still quite old-school and my reaction against it is to not use virtual instruments, nor MIDI nor to copy and paste anything I have recorded. I create my own sounds with the analogue synths. With some, I even have to photograph the synth knobs, because some don’t have the option to save presets. I don’t use streaming platforms, though my music is there, and I still prefer music in physical format or high quality MP3 or FLAC. The music that is being created this decade that I like more is the one that uses methods from the past. I’m not very fond of the way the music industry changed in this century. I don’t make a living out of music, but it’s ever more difficult to be heard.



“There was a time when the internet was bringing people together. Now it’s separating people.”

Everything in our lives is turning digital. I’m returning to a simpler life, not using much technology. I was pretty enthusiastic with the internet at the beginning, but we are becoming too addicted to smartphones, social networks, and dopamine rushes from the digital world. There was a time when the internet was bringing people together. Now it’s separating people.

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist? **Luis:** This is a difficult one as I love so many artists. To choose just one, Sonic Youth.

AB Records: Favourite album? **Luis:** Also difficult to choose. A possible answer is *Souvlaki* from Slowdive.

AB Records: Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Luis:** *Sit Down for Dinner* by Blonde Redhead.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **Luis:** Honestly, I don’t remember. Possibly some local artist.

AB Records: Loudest gig as an audience member? **Luis:** Beck at Primavera Sound.

AB Records: Style icon? **Luis:** Don’t have one.

AB Records: Favourite film? **Luis:** *Stalker*, directed by Andrei Tarkovsky.

AB Records: Favourite TV show? **Luis:** *Twin Peaks*, all three seasons.

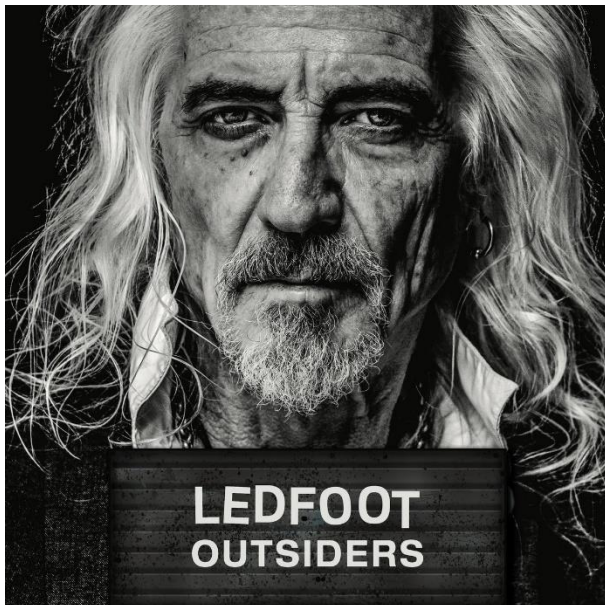
AB Records: Favourite up and coming artist? **Luis:** Maquina, a psychedelic band from Portugal that recently signed to Fuzz Club Records. Amazing band live!



Here in My Head

Tim Scott McConnell is carved in the tradition of the great American troubadour, with an honest, direct, and relatable integrity. Having since relocated to Norway, he writes and releases original music under the penname of **LEDFOOT**. This output gloriously and seamlessly taps into his dual heritage, specifically harnessing the DIY and spirited nature of the original bluesmen, and then fantastically crossing this timeless melting pot with noir Scandinavian influences. His recent record, the nine-track offering of *Outsiders*, encapsulates the essence of Ledfoot's music with an authentic and revitalising drive, an exceptional underground gem for modern times. As the buzz and excitement surrounding this record continues to grow, Tim took some time out to chat with *Aldora Britain Records* about his creative odyssey to date. We discussed formative musical memories, the beginnings of the Ledfoot project, a selection of his recorded output, and much, much more. That exclusive conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

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Aldora Britain Records: Hello Tim, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic artist based over in Norway. It is amazing how music can bring us together. Let's start off by travelling back in time, and let's go to the very beginning of your creative journey. What are some of your earliest musical memories and what was it that first pushed you towards pursuing this passion of yours?

Tim Scott McConnell: Hello, fine thanks. Sitting in my grandfather's car listening to country. I have no idea what instigated this eccentric pursuit. Ha! Sometimes you just take a wrong turn.

Aldora Britain Records: And now, let's take a leap forward to the present day and your impeccable output as Ledfoot. I am really drawn in by your impressive songwriting and songcraft. How do you approach this part of your

process? Are you drawn to particular themes or topics? Perhaps coming from a personal, observational, or even fictional perspective?

Tim Scott McConnell: I guess it's mostly observational, even if what takes place is only in my imagination, or a variation on something I've experienced or been a witness too. I'm constantly working on a few songs at once. I've done it for so many years the process is just part of who I am.

Aldora Britain Records: Earlier this year, you released a superb LP in the form of *Outsiders*. I have just discovered this outing over on Bandcamp, but it has made a strong impression already. What are your memories from writing, recording and releasing this set, and how would you say you have grown and evolved as an artist since your earlier output?

Tim Scott McConnell: I wanted to write a record of songs about people on the fringes of society, as the title implies. I grew up in that world, I know it.

Aldora Britain Records: It is a pearl of an album from start to finish, but I would like to pick out two personal favourites. Let's go for 'I'm the Outsider' and 'Thunder and Rain'. For each, what is the story behind the song, and can you remember the moment it came to be? Did anything in particular inspire them and what do they mean to you as the writer?

“It’s mostly observational ... or a variation on something I’ve experienced or been a witness too. I’m constantly working on a few songs at once. I’ve done it for so many years the process is just part of who I am.”

Tim Scott McConnell: ‘Outsider’ is just a song about accepting who you are, even if it means you don’t fit in, fuck it, it’s just the way you ride. ‘Thunder and Rain’ is a nod to all the gunfighter and murder ballads I grew up on, and once again, accepting what you’ve become.

Aldora Britain Records: Previously, if we travel back to 2021, you released another gem called *Black Valley*. This was my introduction to your music, so I look back on it especially fondly. How do you reflect on this set as a whole now, and is there anything that you would edit or change looking back with the benefit of hindsight?

Tim Scott McConnell: A record is like a journal, it’s a reflection of where you are as an artist at that point in time, it is what it is, only fools dream of changing the past. Accept it and move on, keep trying to get better.

Aldora Britain Records: As you well know by now, I love the Ledfoot sound and your approach to making music. Rock, blues, dark and gothic folk, it is all in there and so much more. How would you say this style of yours came about, what goes into it for you, and who are some of your biggest influences and inspirations as an artist currently?

Tim Scott McConnell: I wanted to do something honest, no bullshit and personal, like Reverend Gary Davis, Son House, Woody Guthrie, Roscoe Holcomb, The Carter Family, fill a room with the truth, like they did. I’m a workaholic, to tell the truth I don’t have a clue about what is happening in the world musically, always working on my own shit.

Aldora Britain Records: A broad question to finish. We have been through such a unique time in history over the last few years. Both politically and within society, and that is before you throw in the pandemic. How have the last several years impacted on you personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both for the good and the bad? I am curious to hear your insights

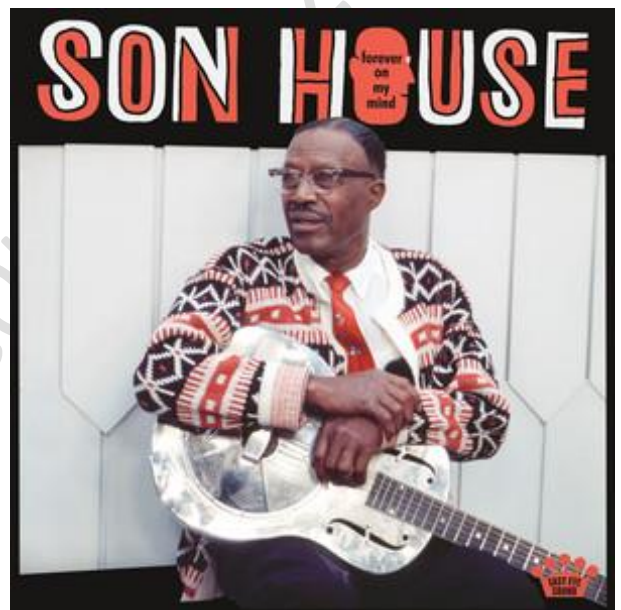
Tim Scott McConnell: I got my first record deal with Chris Blackwell and Island Records, it’s changed drastically and hasn’t changed at all. You just keep working regardless, either because it’s all you want to do or all you know how to do. I’m both.

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist? **Tim:** Depends what mood I’m in. **AB Records:** Favourite album? **Tim:** Depends what mood I’m in. **AB Records:** Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Tim:** Marty Robbins’ *Gunfighter Ballads*.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **Tim:** Eleven, my dad owned a rock club for a while, I used to stand behind the bar. **AB Records:** Loudest gig as an audience member? **Tim:** Ramones at CBGB.

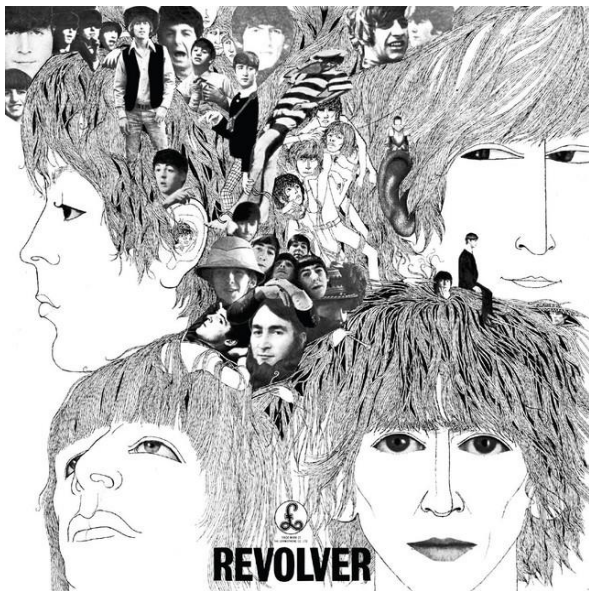
AB Records: Style icon? **Tim:** Edgar Allan Poe. **AB Records:** Favourite film? **Tim:** Depends what mood I’m in. **AB Records:** Favourite TV show? **Tim:** You guessed it, depends what mood I’m in. **AB Records:** Favourite up and coming artist? **Tim:** Any young fucker who has their own story to tell and tells it well.



Patient Zero

In Queens, New York, alternative maverick mind **BURNER HERZOG** plies his trade. That is, a brash and avant-garde leaning approach to the modern world of art rock and experimental indie music. This fantastic take shines on his most recent LP offering, 2023's *Random Person*, a brand-new chapter on this twisting and turning odyssey. Across the ten featured tracks, Burner and his musical companions invite listeners into a quirky and enticing world. The songcraft is versatile and emotionally driven and comes across exquisitely on such unforgettable cuts as the masterful 'Patient Zero', an upbeat alternative pop song in all its glory. As the buzz surrounding *Random Person* continues to build, Burner sat down for a chat with *Aldora Britain Records* about his musical adventures so far. We discussed his approach to songwriting and songcraft, a selection of his recorded output, popular original compositions, and much, much more. That exclusive in-depth conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

If you enjoy this content, please consider making a small, magazine-sized donation at the following link: <https://paypal.me/aldorabritainrecords>. Thank you!



Aldora Britain Records: Hello Burner, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic artist from over in Queens. Thank you for your time. It is amazing how music can bring us together. Let's start off by rewinding the clocks, and let's go all the way back to the very beginning of your creative journey. What are some of your earliest musical memories and what was it that first pushed you towards pursuing this passion of yours?

Burner Herzog: Hi Tom. I'm hunky dory. My earliest musical memory is listening to *Revolver* by The Beatles in my dad's office, just up the road from Tower Records in Hollywood. I think we were even recording it onto a cassette so I could listen to it later. I was three. It was a seismic moment for me. There was no single moment I realised I had to make music, more a series of accidents and serendipitous meetings that pushed me down the path. Especially meeting my friend Adam Heaton, who was and is a crazy creative genius. Also, I'm just not as happy doing much else.

Aldora Britain Records: And now, let's take a leap forward to the present day and your output as Burner Herzog. I am definitely drawn in by your impressive songwriting and songcraft. How do you approach this part of your process? Are you drawn to specific themes or topics? Perhaps coming from a personal, observational, or even fictional perspective?

Burner Herzog: I would say it's a metaphysical perspective. I want to write something you hear in dreams. I don't ever sit down and think, 'I'm going to write a song about [insert topic here].' I discover what I'm doing through the act of writing and sort it out later. There's no fiction, nor even much conscious thought, but there is a lot of writing to find something true. Looking at the results I seem to be focused on love, God, cats, and death.

Aldora Britain Records: In 2023, you released an impeccable LP in the form of *Random Person*. I have actually just discovered this one over on Bandcamp, but it has made such a strong impression already. What are your memories from writing, recording and releasing this set, and how would you say you have grown and evolved as an artist since your earlier output?

“I would say it’s a metaphysical perspective. I want to write something you hear in dreams ... There’s no fiction, nor even much conscious thought, but there is a lot of writing to find something true.”

Burner Herzog: Thanks for the kind words. I was thinking of hanging it all up when I moved out here to New York, but a couple friends wanted to play music. Turned out we had a band pretty quickly, so I started hearing songs in my head that that band could play. Then, the pandemic, but I kept writing like I was getting ready to make an LP with the band. The pandemic subsided somewhat, and we made the LP at BC Studios in Gowanus. BC is run by its namesake, Martin Bisi, who has pretty much singlehandedly kept things running there since 1979. It is a studio like none other and he is an engineer like none other. We basically set up to record in a giant cave, an old truck loading dock with ceilings two or three stories high. Martin barely put any effects on anything and just recorded the room. Most of what you hear is what happened in the room in the one or two takes we did per song, with minimal overdubs.

I don’t understand what growing as an artist means. I perceive my development as an artist in parallel to my development as a human being, I have less energy than I once did but what energy I have is spent more wisely. I see this album as a refinement of what I’ve wanted to do all along.

Aldora Britain Records: It is a gem of an album, but I would like to pick out two personal favourites, ‘Patient Zero’ and ‘Sometimes It’s Hard to Break Free’. For each, what is the story behind the song, and can you remember the moment it came to be? Did anything in particular inspire them and what do they mean to you as the writer and artist?

Burner Herzog: You picked the two really personal songs on the album. ‘Sometimes It’s Hard to Break Free’ is about staring at a wall in the dead of winter in Williamsburg, and ‘Patient Zero’ is about wandering through Greenwood Cemetery in Park Slope, the first ‘destination’ grave plot in the United States. They’re thinking about building a thirteen-story building to obstruct the amazing sunsets you can see from there, by the way. ‘Sometimes’ is just kind of a self-portrait in mosaic. It’s like my version of ‘Hip Priest’ by The Fall. ‘Patient Zero’ is about death and waiting around to die. But both songs are kind of hopeful in their way, and both songs concern two different people who have excellent hair. I wrote the majority of both in dreams, waking up to record them.

Aldora Britain Records: Previously, if we travel back to 2020, you released the sensational *Big Love*. This was my introduction to your music, so I look back on it especially fondly. How do you reflect on this set as a whole now, and is there anything that you would edit or change looking back with the benefit of hindsight?

Burner Herzog: Honestly, I would change a lot of it but it’s impossible to be back in that mindset, so I couldn’t begin to tell you what that would involve. I was so deep in that project for so long but once it was done, and especially after Paisley Shirt picked it up for release, the entire ambience in which that work took place dissipated. I love a lot of the songs but to me it feels kind of sloppy and all over the place stylistically. But I’m still glad I did it. I had to get that album out of my system and I was almost religiously devoted to doing so for a couple years. Not to be a connoisseur of my own work, but I think ‘Prayer Candles’ and ‘I Need Your Love’ are two of the best Herzog songs.

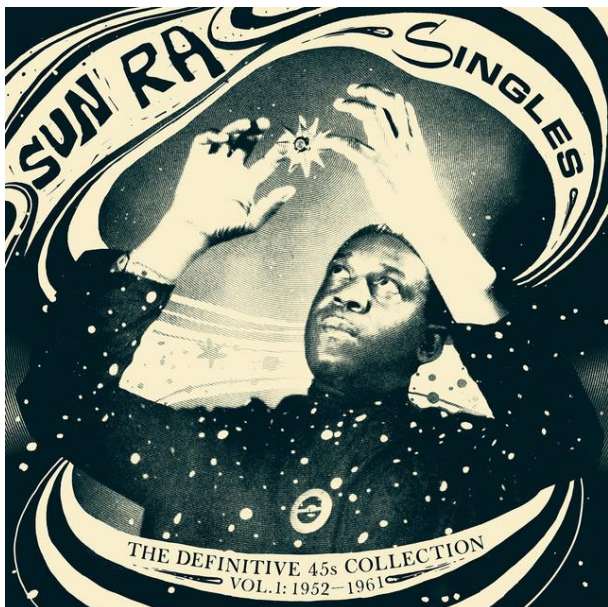
Aldora Britain Records: As you well know by now, I love the Burner Herzog sound and your approach to making and creating music. Art rock, experimental, indie rock, avant pop, it is all in there and more. How would you say



“We were a good band, but I had some wackier ambitions with music and wanted a project that could realize those ambitions, not knowing exactly how that would work. Slowly, the answers came.”

this style of yours came about, what goes into it for you, and who are some of your biggest influences and inspirations as an artist currently?

Burner Herzog: Wow, that’s a big question. Herzog came about because I was frustrated playing indie rock in an indie rock band called Brasil. We were a good band, but I had some wackier ambitions with music and wanted a project that could realize those ambitions, not knowing exactly how that would work. Slowly, the answers came. A big moment was when I listened to the Sun Ra *Singles* album at Mayo Thompson’s recommendation. I became a huge Sun Ra fan after that, and it changed my perspective on just about everything, especially the nature of the music I was making. Between that and my love of Arthur Russell, I started to give my work more of a spiritual bent. I began reading metaphysical literature and incorporating the ideas into my music, just like they had. All of the people I’ve mentioned in this interview already are huge influences but a few others I can think of at this moment are Roky Erickson, The Gun Club, Captain Beefheart, John Cale, and Dean Blunt.



Currently I’m most inspired by the people I work with in the studio and the people in my band. I’m more and more focused on what’s in front of me, and that’s a good thing. But I’ve been thinking about Steve Albini a lot in the wake of his death. People like him and Jim O’Rourke and Kramer, producers who have their own style and made great music of their own, are the ones I most look up to nowadays. Also, The Space Lady.

Aldora Britain Records: A broad question to finish. We have been through such a unique time in history over the last few years. Both politically and within society, and that is before you throw in the pandemic. How have the last several years impacted on you personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both for the good and the bad? I am curious to hear your insights.

Burner Herzog: I can’t think of a single person that hasn’t been completely rewired by the years since 2020, so it’s hard for me to think of what makes me special in that regard. I’ll accentuate the positive, increasingly in the years since the pandemic I am focused on spending my time in a productive way toward the things that I want to do and the person I want to become. I spend the majority of my professional life as a recording engineer now, and I’m much happier for it. I remember waiting for the train to go to BC for a mix session one day and thinking, ‘Well, this is what I want to do every day.’ More and more, it’s the reason I’m waiting for the train, which is cool.

So, that ties into your other question, because I have more of an insight into the music industry than I used to. There are a lot of exciting things going on in music right now. There are a lot of young people who have more technical ability than I could ever dream of, as well as the passion to match it. And they’re making worthwhile work, constantly. The business of music has always been terrible and it’s always been very difficult to make money off music until the day you can make money off music. Example, right after lockdown, major labels were signing bands that got huge on TikTok, only to put them on tour to absolutely nobody. May you live in interesting times, eh? But to quote a song I’ve really enjoyed the past couple years, ‘Song for Willie’ by Magnolia Electric Co., ‘As long as there are sundowns, there will always be a west.’ As long as there is music being

“As long as there is music being produced, there will always be some kind of market around its enjoyment. So, make the music first and ask questions later, always.”

produced, there will always be some kind of market around its enjoyment. So, make the music first and ask questions later, always.

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist? **Burner:** Pere Ubu or Lucinda Williams.

AB Records: Favourite album? **Burner:** *Insignificance* by Jim O'Rourke.

AB Records: Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Burner:** *Kate and Anna McGarrigle* by Kate and Anna McGarrigle.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **Burner:** Ryuichi Sakamoto at The Palace in LA, 1990.

AB Records: Loudest gig as an audience member? **Burner:** My Blood Valentine at Santa Monica Civic, 2008.

AB Records: Style icon? **Burner:** Albert Einstein.

AB Records: Favourite film? **Burner:** *Schizopolis*.

AB Records: Favourite TV show? **Burner:** *The Sopranos*.

AB Records: Favourite up and coming artist? **Burner:** Nyxy Nyx.



Tune Rider

Maryland based **GORDON MICHAELS** is an old-school tunesmith. When writing an all-original composition, this innovative singer-songwriter will always lean into his pop sensibility, seeking out the next irresistible earworm, a radio worthy slice of sonic bliss. This has been the remit on such recent singles as psychological romance thriller 'Julianne', the collaborative and contemporary 'Body is In Your Mind', and the wild and primal 'Jungle Seduction'. Across these selections and more, Gordon truly emphasises his versatility and depth as an artist and songwriter, travelling in varying directions and exploring a myriad of lyrical themes and topics. Key touchstones are indeed iconic writers such as Billy Joel, Paul McCartney, and Sting. Taking a break from his current creative activities, Gordon once again sat down for a chat with *Aldora Britain Records* about his unforgettable and brilliant output to date. We discussed his approach to performance, 2020's *Tune Rider* album, the influence of Joni Mitchell, and much, much more. That exclusive in-depth conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

If you enjoy this content, please consider making a small, magazine-sized donation at the following link: <https://paypal.me/aldorabritainrecords>. Thank you!

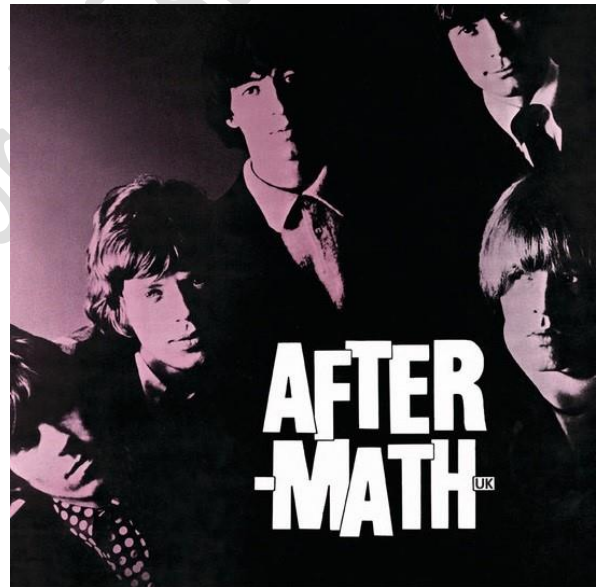
Aldora Britain Records: Hello Gordon, how are you? I think it is about time that we welcomed you back to the *Aldora Britain Records* e-zine. The last time was back in 2022. It has been far too long! As always, I would like to kick things off by travelling back in time. You previously mentioned your first live music memory was The Rolling Stones in '66. Can you tell me about this? What formative impact did this show have on you back then?

Gordon Michaels: Hello! Good to be back with you! Yes! The Stones in '66 at the Baltimore Civic Center, the centre was only about half full, The Stones hadn't really gotten big at that time. Mick wore a jacket that looked like it had tree bark on it. He beckoned to the front row to come onstage but the security guards pushed the audience members back. Charlie fell off the drum seat and was picked up by Keith! They sounded great.

They had just released *Aftermath* and did just about the whole album plus their previous hits. I knew I wanted to be a part of all this energy and style but I wasn't sure just how yet, I was sixteen and had just started to self-learn guitar.

Aldora Britain Records: And now, let's make a stop-off in the late 1970s. This is when you recorded and released *Stargazer* on a major. This must have been such an amazing and invigorating time to be making music. We absolutely need to explore it. What are your memories from writing, recording and releasing these tunes, and is there anything that you would edit or change looking back with the benefit of hindsight?

Gordon Michaels: There was a lot going on musically. I was listening to Paul Simon, Billy Joel, Joni Mitchell, Stevie Wonder, but the punk pop movement was also starting to get airplay with The Police. Recording the album at The Hit Factory in New York in the winter of 1979 was like a dream at first, but eventually I settled into trying to get the sound I wanted while at the same time collaborating with the vision of Hugh McCracken, the engineer, and the studio players. The tunes had already been written and encompassed several previous years of writing and recording demos, many in a farmhouse in the little town of Dagsboro, Delaware. Hugh played my demo for the studio players and we then tried to get the original feel of the demo, but by the third run through or so the songs started to take on their own life. For example, 'Stargazer, the title track, became a more gospel feel, especially with Richard Tee's amazing gospel piano, 'Monkey Mother' became much jazzier with Tony Levin's



“I knew I wanted to be a part of all this energy and style but I wasn’t sure just how yet, I was sixteen and had just started to self-learn guitar.”

bass and Tee’s jazz chords on the Rhodes. The basic tracks were done like a small combo, me play playing rhythm guitar, along with drums, bass, and keyboards. Hugh sat in the middle of us directing.

Looking back, I think I would have chosen a few different tunes to include that weren’t so non-commercial, but some of those non-commercial tunes like ‘Ugly Ramona’ and ‘Danny Dies in Dublin’ are some people’s favourites, so you never know what happens because of the myriad causative factors at play in the moment. Looking back is kind of non-productive.



Aldora Britain Records: When I listen to this album, I always get the distinct impression that these tunes would have come alive up on the live stage. An immersive and memorable evening of pop hooks, rock drive, and some great storytelling in there too. What did you aim to bring to the stage, and what could fans expect from their very first Gordon Michaels live experience back in the 70s and 80s?

Gordon Michaels: I amped up the energy level quite a bit with the live performances in the years following the album’s release and wrote more hard rock oriented songs. After a series of personnel changes, I went up front as a singer-frontman and had the standard rhythm section plus sax behind me, huge sound system, full stage lighting, the works! You can get a feel for that era, early 80s, on a retrospective video I put together with one of our songs, ‘Waiting Right by the Phone’,

at youtube.com/@gordonmichaels. We had a lot of fun on stage. We were featured on *Monday Night Madness* in a local nightclub and did our best to look the part.

Aldora Britain Records: In 2020, you gave the world *Tune Rider*. I have only just discovered this album, but it is making such a strong impression on me just now. Thank you for the music! It is quite a statement as a comeback record, for sure. How do you reflect on this particular LP as a whole now, and how would you say you grew and evolved as an artist in the time between *Stargazer* and *Tune Rider*?

Gordon Michaels: Well, think about the difference between being twenty-nine and being sixty-five. Life seems less romantic, less young versus old, less of an open field in which to sow your oats and more of a completed, manicured landscape in which to contemplate, look back, pick out ironies, look for patterns. The recording process was completely different. *Stargazer* was with a sixty-four channel board on tape, *Tune Rider* was with the recording engineer, multi-instrumentalist, co-producer directing me as I layered up the unlimited tracks one by one in his small off-the-beaten-track recording studio down the street from my house. With *Tune Rider*, I felt much more in control, knowing what I wanted and how to get it.

Aldora Britain Records: Let’s bring things up to the present day now. I can’t stop playing two of your most recent single releases, ‘Julianne’ and ‘Body is In Your Mind’, two Gordon Michaels pearls! Let’s get to know them better. For each, what is the story behind the song, and can you remember the moment it came to be? Did anything in particular inspire them and what do they mean to you as the writer and artist?

Gordon Michaels: Thanks for asking. For ‘Julianne’ I had the chord progression and the melody while adlibbing on piano. I like the implicit tragic sense that blossoms into romance in the chorus. I wanted to write about a tragic romance and was looking for a woman’s name. Mary Ann? Terry Ann? Julienne? Julianne! It sung the best. So, what can I now use in this romantic story that is different and is kind of a twist? How about if they’re very

“My main influences as far as writing are still the writers I listened to from my late teens to my forties, The Beatles, Paul Simon, Billy Joel, Sting.”

close and then she has some kind of a psychotic break? She enters a mental institution, and he is still in love, can't get her off his mind, but she is now incapable of returning that love. Okay, that's a tragedy, and voila! I have the story and lyrics.

For 'Body is In Your Mind' I was sitting in the parking lot of Food Lion and had just heard two songs on the radio that used 'body' in the hook line. It seemed a little overplayed and repetitious, so I said to myself, 'Body, body, body, body is all in your mind.' I began singing the refrain throughout the rest of the afternoon and then fleshed out the rest of the song and lyrics in the following days. I decided to use some creative ambivalence so that the listeners could get several different interpretations. One, don't worry about your body, it's just an image in your brain. Two, if you want to change your body image it all starts with an idea. Three, romantic and sexual attraction all happens in the brain and mind first before the body responds, and so on. We have a video coming out for this song on Friday.

Aldora Britain Records: I always like to delve further into an artist's roots. For me, it is actually one of the most enjoyable parts of any interview. You previously namechecked *Court and Spark* as an all-time favourite. Can you remember the first time you heard this record? How would you say it has informed you and your musical output since? More broadly, who are some of your biggest influences and inspirations as an artist currently?

Gordon Michaels: I first heard *Court and Spark* in 1974 while living in Ocean Pines, Maryland. I only knew Joni from her earlier folkly soprano work. I was really impressed so much with the arrangements, instrumentation, the new and warmer alto voice, the blend of sensual and spiritual themes, just fantastic. I think it has influenced me as far as looking for broad themes for lyrics, blending the mental-emotional subjective experience, and using edgy chord inversions and odd fingering or tuning for guitar chords. My main influences as far as writing are still the writers I listened to from my late teens to my forties, The Beatles, Paul Simon, Billy Joel, Sting. I must confess that I don't listen to a lot of current music, I don't like most of it. I like some of Ed Sheeran's stuff, Avril Lavigne.



Aldora Britain Records: A broad question to finish. We have been through such a unique time in history over the last few years. Both politically and within society, and that is before you throw in the pandemic. How have the last several years impacted on you personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both for the good and the bad? I am curious to hear your insights.

Aldora Britain Records: Melody based recordings have taken a dive, rhythm has increased in importance and in the mix, short phrases almost exclusively and sensual oriented stuff mostly. I contemplated writing and recording that kind of thing but it felt alien. I think you need to write and record what you hear internally and not worry so much about what others are doing. I realise that might at times make me sound dated but so be it!

Music consumption has been ultra corporatised and commodified which makes it difficult for novel kinds of music to be heard. Spotify has severely damaged the independent recording artist trying to make some money. CDs are dead. When I was in my teens we sat and actually listened to whole albums at a sitting, I don't think that happens as much anymore. Attention spans have shrunk, social media has taken over from physical social

“I contemplated writing and recording that kind of thing but it felt alien. I think you need to write and record what you hear internally and not worry so much about what others are doing.”

gatherings. I’m sure there will eventually be some sort of pushback, like a new underground movement, probably already is somewhere out there.

Currently I’m working on a film, a musical documentary of the life of Einstein. I wanted to do something bigger than just another music video, larger in scope with the opportunity to write different genres of songs. I’m hoping to finish by Christmas and post it on YouTube.

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist? **Gordon:** Beatles, Joni Mitchell, Stevie Wonder, Paul Simon.

AB Records: Favourite album? **Gordon:** *Revolver*, *Court and Spark*, *Aja*.

AB Records: Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Gordon:** *Court and Spark*.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **Gordon:** Rolling Stones, Civic Center, Baltimore, 1966.

AB Records: Loudest gig as an audience member? **Gordon:** Watching *Oppenheimer*, front row, IMAX.

AB Records: Style icon? **Gordon:** Albert Einstein.

AB Records: Favourite film? **Gordon:** *The Crucible*.

AB Records: Favourite TV show? **Gordon:** *The Last Kingdom*, Netflix.

AB Records: Favourite up and coming artist? **Gordon:** Gordon Michaels.



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Rewind...

[A B Records Issue 190 \(July 2024\)](#)

Featuring the sounds of The Floppy-Pinkies, Dan Kapitans, The Word66, Alkaline Trio, Lowlives, The Wild Honey Collective, Spirits Burning, Visions of Albion, Letlo Vin, Corey Matheson, and Guidon Bear.

[A B Records Issue 189 \(July 2024\)](#)

Featuring the sounds of Campbell and Johnston, Endrick and the Sandwiches, Joe Cotton, Theo Travis, Richard Hawley, John Smith, Near Death Experience, Clare Free, The Heat Inc., Mike Stapleton, and Matt Ellis.

[A B Records Issue 188 \(July 2024\)](#)

Featuring the sounds of The Eric Hisaw Band, Mick Shaffer, Alkaline Trio, Lowlives, Soloman Smith, Jack Adamant, Sonny Bill Glover, The Safety of Life at Sea, Russell A Bave, Kristina Jacobsen, and Camille Miller.

[A B Records Issue 187 \(July 2024\)](#)

Featuring the sounds of Mike Evin, Mojo Holler, Zoe FitzGerald Carter, Richard Hawley, John Smith, Mat D, Phil Doleman, Mark Rubin – Jew of Oklahoma, Number Stations, Zebra Crossing Sounds, and Barefoot Iano.

[A B Records Issue 186 \(July 2024\)](#)

Featuring the sounds of Chuck McDermott, Alkaline Trio, Lowlives, Chris Wilhelm, Trash Sun, Feral Housecats, Driving School, Ross Neilzen, Harrison Lemke, King Thurber, and Sparkle*Jets U.K.

[A B Records Issue 185 \(June 2024\)](#)

Featuring the sounds of Ralph Beeby and the Elephant Collective, Kele Fleming, Richard Hawley, John Smith, Torment of Giants, Mark Charlesworth, The Pain Splats, Swallows, Reverend Killjoy, Jack Droppers and the Best Intentions, Mic Harrison and the High Score.

[A B Records Issue 184 \(June 2024\)](#)

Featuring the sounds of Alkaline Trio, Lowlives, Christopher Mark Jones, Coyote Motel, Victorious Sons, Taylor Curtis, Noel Holston, Bunny Cult, Cyr and the Cosmonauts, An American Forrest, and Miz Stefani.

[A B Records Issue 183 \(June 2024\)](#)

Featuring the sounds of Sibyl Vane, Richard Hawley, John Smith, Maynard and the Musties, Jack o' the Clock, Teddy and the Rough Riders, The Accidentals, Georgie Jessup, Swirls, Davie Anderson, and Joel David Weir.

[A B Records Issue 182 \(June 2024\)](#)

Featuring the sounds of Marshall Sidbury, George and the Imagination Machine, Mighty Violets, Lendemains Versinthes, Feverjaw, Daniel Rodrigues, Tommy Romero, The Journals Kept, Jaggy Edges, Richard Hawley, and John Smith.

[A B Records Issue 181 \(June 2024\)](#)

Featuring the sounds of Luna River, Jonathan Foster, John O'Sullivan, Follow Me Dark, Carmen Gomes, Prinz Grizzley, Squirrel Butter, Faces of Sarah, Richard Hawley, John Smith, and Steve Gilligan.

[A B Records Issue 180 \(June 2024\)](#)

Featuring the sounds of H27, Armchairanarchists, The Speed of Sounds, Blues for Neighbors, SheFound, April Laczko, Samuel Bellamy, Richard Hawley, John Smith, Steve J Curtis, and Ricky and JP.

[A B Records Issue 179 \(June 2024\)](#)

Featuring the sounds of Off Wing, Robin Mukherjee, Voodoo Ramble, The Melted Americans, Yeti Set Go, Tinkertown, Richard Hawley, John Smith, Vetna, Wouter Thijssen, and Jason Kent.

Aldora Britain Records Est. 2013