



# ALDORA BRITAIN RECORDS

The Global Independent & Underground Music E-Zine  
Issue 470, Sunday 23rd November 2025  
“Tomorrow’s Music Today”

ABR’S TOP PICKS...

Keeping North, Kirsti Meiers,  
and Zac Henderson!

Live Spotlight: RICHARD HAWLEY  
with John Smith at De Montfort Hall,  
Leicester, England!

Also... The Top 10 Most Influential Records  
of 1968 as voted for by our featured artists!

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(Pictured artist: Keeping North)

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Richard Hawley picture credit: Dean Chalkley.

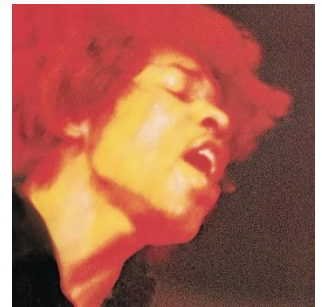
# The Top 10 Most Influential Records of 1968 as voted for by our featured artists!

Aldora Britain Records has had the immense privilege of talking to thousands of talented artists over the years, from a variety of backgrounds and from every continent on the planet. With each interview, we ask these musicians some of their favourite things in a segment we call the 'Quickfire Round'. In 2025, we thought it might be fun to present some of these answers in specially curated lists, like this one, 'The Top 10 Most Influential Records of 1968'. It is sure to generate conversation, opinion, and maybe even outrage! But here it is, some of the indisputable favourites from the *ABR Community*, enjoy!

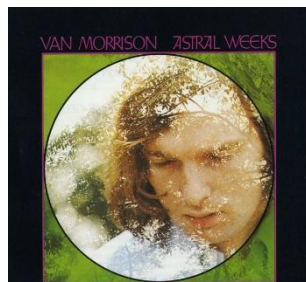
1  
The Beatles  
*The White Album*  
1968

The BEATLES

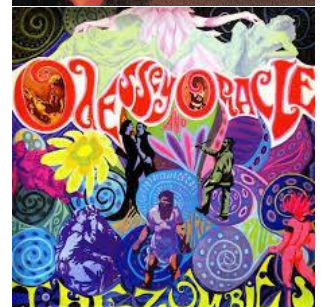
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The Jimi Hendrix  
Experience  
*Electric Ladyland*  
1968



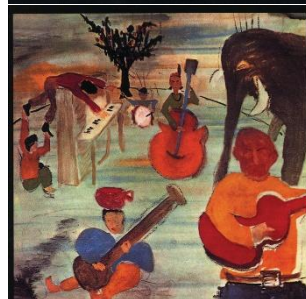
3  
Van Morrison  
*Astral Weeks*  
1968



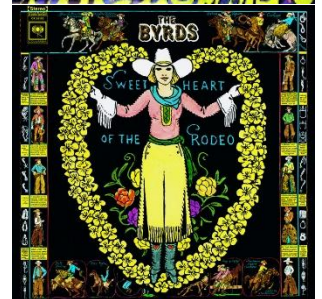
4  
The Zombies  
*Odessey and Oracle*  
1968



5  
The Band  
*Music from Big Pink*  
1968



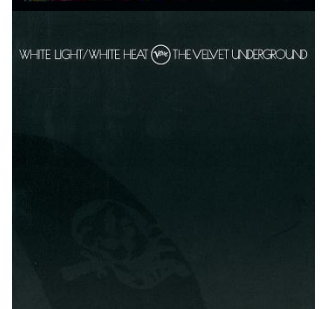
6  
The Byrds  
*Sweetheart of the Rodeo*  
1968



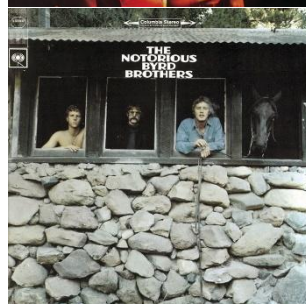
7  
The Kinks  
*The Kinks Are the Village  
Green Preservation  
Society*  
1968



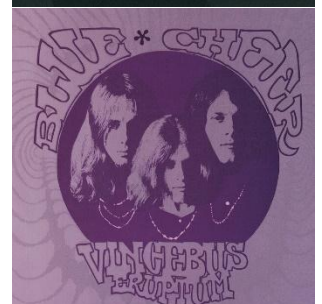
8  
The Velvet Underground  
*White Light / White Heat*  
1968



9  
The Byrds  
*The Notorious Byrd  
Brothers*  
1968



10  
Blue Cheer  
*Vincebus Eruptum*  
1968

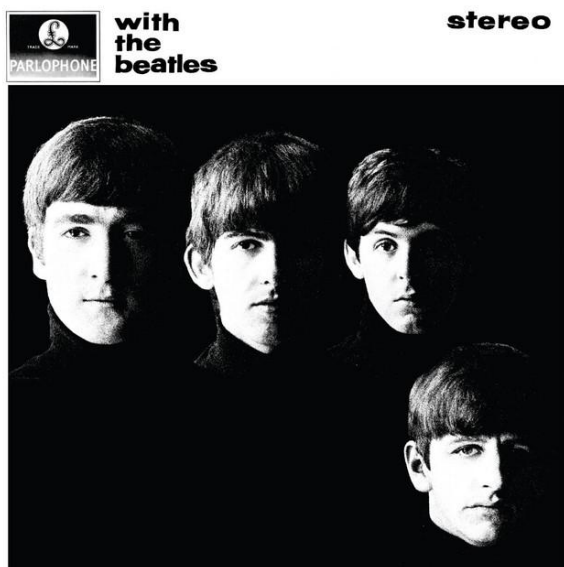


# Swimming in Deep Time

**Keeping North** are an Australian collective with a fantastically rootsy backbone. Their sound finds a truly original voice, as has been captured throughout their exceptional 2025 record, entitled *Demons and Dreamers*. These twelve tracks preach their alternative country goodness with a fierce abandon, capturing the band's musical friendship and camaraderie, a tightknit connective bond that informs each of their compositions. The *Demons and Dreamers* LP is unquestionably compelling and moving in its approach, with a glorious roaming and questing sonic undertone. And taking a break from these spellbinding musings, bandmember Steve Tyson took a brief respite to reflect with *Aldora Britain Records* on his musical journey so far. We discussed formative artistic memories from his adolescence, the early days and beginnings of Keeping North, a selection of their recorded output to date, and much, much more. That exclusive in-depth conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

Keep up to date with Keeping North [HERE](#). Listen to Keeping North [HERE](#).

And please don't forget to send a magazine-sized donation to Aldora Britain Records [HERE](#).



**Aldora Britain Records:** Hello Steve, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic band from over in Australia. 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?

**Steve:** Hi Tom, thanks so much for this, we really appreciate it. So, earliest memories. My dad was a famous radio announcer in Australia, hosting the Breakfast session for twenty-five years on the ABC, our national broadcaster. He would play stuff like Sinatra, light classics, which I liked, but certainly had no lasting impact on me. Dad would get all the new releases from record companies, and the stuff that didn't suit his format, he would bring home and give to me. One day he brought home a record called *With the Beatles*, I played side one, track one, 'It

Won't Be Long', and my life was changed forever. I just wanted to be George Harrison. It fuelled a passion that remains undiminished to this day. I went and saw McCartney a few years ago when he was on tour here, and at the end of the show, I just sat there and cried. Because right there on that stage was the reason I picked up a guitar in the first place.

**Aldora Britain Records:** And now, let's take a leap forward to the present day and a brilliant project of yours out of Brisbane. The beginnings of Keeping North must have been an exciting, invigorating time. How did it all come to be? How did you meet the other members and what was the initial spark that brought you together on this creative, musical level?

**Steve:** I had, still have, I guess, a solo career here in Australia. I had two long-term bands before that. A band in the 90s called Rough Red, which was a folk-rock thing, we had a couple of minor hits here, released half a dozen albums and toured Europe six times, playing festivals in Scandinavia in particular. Then a trio after that called twentysevens, yes, with a small 't', just to be arty! We toured the UK in 2006 opening for Status Quo on thirty-one dates. After all that, I settled into a solo career. Since 2010, I've released four albums. It's a bit of a cottage industry. I would make a record, tour it, play festivals, and in those days, you would actually sell these things called CDs after the show. For much of that time, I toured with a band as Steve Tyson and the Train Rex. My guitarist in that band was Ian 'Sal' Shawsmith, one of my dearest friends. And Jodi Murtha joined us, playing keys and bass. Every night on tour I would hear Jodi's voice doing backing vocals, and I would think, 'I've got to find a way to get that voice out front.'

“I’ve always been a storyteller through my songs, but they have mainly been my stories. Things that have happened to me on my travels ... But these new songs were emerging as other people’s stories. Just little bits of fiction, little vignettes of other people’s lives.”

At the same time, I had really been listening to the Robert Plant and Alison Krauss collaboration and just loved that close interplay with their voices. Then Sal introduced me to Birds of Chicago, the duo featuring Allison Russell and her husband JT Nero. Again, that beautiful duet thing, but then they would each do songs solo. That prompted me to go back and rediscover those classic Tammy Wynette and George Jones duets. I’m also a huge fan of Willy Vlautin, both as an author, and as the songwriter for his band The Delines. His songs combine Willy’s wonderful little pieces of fiction, little snapshots of American life, with a female voice, Amy Boone, taking the lead.

I had also been rediscovering some stuff I played and listened to when I first started playing in bands, the soul stuff put out by Sam and Dave, Otis Redding, and Joe Tex. I really loved ‘Show Me’, Joe Tex’s big hit. But then I discovered all this other stuff Joe wrote and produced, and it was country music. He wrote and produced a whole album for the Australian singer Diana Trask way back. That crossover thing, that country-soul thing really interested me. You get that from Ray Charles of course. One of the greatest R&B performers singing country songs. And going through my early guitar player phase, listening to Clapton and Hendrix, I rediscovered the guys that influenced them, like Albert King and Freddie King. Plus, Sal and I are both drawn to that alt-country thing with a bit of a tougher edge. Bands like Blackie and The Rodeo Kings.

So, all this stuff was floating around in my head, all this music was on rotation on my car’s CD player, when the first couple of songs came to me. And I was hearing them either as duets, or with Jodi taking the lead. I’ve always been a storyteller through my songs, but they have mainly been my stories. Things that have happened to me on my travels, or family stories. But these new songs were emerging as other people’s stories. Just little bits of fiction, little vignettes of other people’s lives.



“When I had this clear vision of what I wanted this band to be, the songs just started coming to me. That's how it happens for me. I might not write a song for six months, and then the first idea will come, and it's like the floodgates opening.”

As far as finding the right people to be in the band, who to add to complement Jodi, Sal and me, I had a very clear vision for these songs, and I knew we just had to have pedal steel incorporated into them, so we were very happy to bring Jeff Spencer on board. The songs were crying out for that sort of approach and Jeff just ‘got it’ right away. When I first picked up a guitar, I started a band at school at the age of twelve with a bloke named Stu Hoffman, who could borrow his big brother's drumkit. We played in bands for the next fifteen years, eventually went our separate ways, but remained lifelong friends. I am so happy that we have come full circle, and he is now the drummer in the band.



**Aldora Britain Records:** You are fresh from releasing a superb new record called *Demons and Dreamers*. This was also my introduction to the band, so it already holds a special place in my record collection. What are your memories from writing, recording and releasing it, and how would you say you grew and evolved as artists throughout this process?

**Steve:** When I had this clear vision of what I wanted this band to be, the songs just started coming to me. That's how it happens for me. I might not write a song for six months, and then the first idea will come, and it's like the floodgates opening. I wrote all of these songs in a four-month period. We were blessed to have our own studio, in the Byron Bay hinterland, so we recorded the album over the space of a couple of months, with basically Sal and me producing it. Then it was just a case of getting it out there. We have a great

PR guy here in Australia, Stuart Coupe, and he has managed to get us onto radio and press here, where the reaction to the record has been really good. The band really consolidated during the recording phase, it really set the platform for how we would play the songs live.

**Aldora Britain Records:** I am definitely drawn in by the band's dynamic composition and songcraft. How do you approach this part of your creative process? Is it collaborative or more individual? Are you drawn to specific themes or topics? Perhaps coming from more of a personal, observational, or even fictional perspective or point of view?

**Steve:** My whole solo career has been based on personal songs. I've been very fortunate to travel the world for five decades, collecting stories to turn into songs, or discovering family secrets and finding songs there. But most of the songs on *Demons and Dreamers* are, as I intimated earlier, little pieces of fiction, made up stories of other people's lives, usually on the dark side. Together with Sal and Stu, I grew up in the Australian city Brisbane at the time of the notorious Fitzgerald Inquiry into corruption, playing gigs in clubs run by petty gangsters and bent cops. We didn't know him at the time, but Jeff was hanging around those places too. The characters that frequented those venues provided plenty of lyrical fodder for these songs written many years later. As far as how the songs take form, they start with me, I'll usually record rough demos and bring them to the band, and then we work stuff up collaboratively.

**Aldora Britain Records:** Let's get more specific with this one now. I would like to focus on two favourites, 'Lightning Strike' and 'Broken'. 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 of each?

“I recorded an album once in a studio just around the corner from the Cross, and the images of the working girls were hard to forget. The characters in these songs are important to me. They may be fictional, but I think they are inspired by real life.”

**Steve:** When I was touring Europe one time with Rough Red, we played a gig in East Germany and had to travel all through the night to play at a festival in Belgium the following afternoon. So that journey just came to mind when I wrote 'Lightning Strike' about two star crossed lovers, one driving through the night via Berlin to Amsterdam, wondering if the other person will still be there waiting for him. 'Broken' is a bit of a contradiction, in that it is a fairly 'happy' piece musically, but the song is about the working girls in Sydney's Kings Cross who have a pretty tough life. I recorded an album once in a studio just around the corner from the Cross, and the images of the working girls were hard to forget. The characters in these songs are important to me. They may be fictional, but I think they are inspired by real life.



**Aldora Britain Records:** When I listen to the record, I definitely get the impression that the band would put on an unforgettable live show. I am picturing a captivating display of musicianship, for sure. Is this something that you do? If so, what do you aim to bring to the stage as a band and what can a fan expect from their very first Keeping North live experience?

**Steve:** The guys in the band are really fine players, and we put our heart and soul into live performances. The songs just come to life live, even though we play them pretty true to the record. Where we get to stretch out a bit is with some of the covers we play, where we put interesting twists on other people's great songs.

**Aldora Britain Records:** As you well know by now, I love that Keeping North sound and your approach to making and creating music. That strong and enduring alternative country foundation! 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?

**Steve:** Certainly all those artists I mentioned I was listening to when the songs started to come together are major influences. Robert Plant and Alison Krauss, The Delines, Joe Tex, Albert King. I love Americana music as a broad genre, the real, straight-from-the-heart stuff, not the formula-driven American country music. But the biggest inspiration for me personally was The Beatles. I would never have picked up a guitar if not for 'It Won't Be Long', still the finest two and a half minutes of popular music ever written I reckon! Jeff's influences are all the great pedal steel players, he is a walking authority on the guys that play that instrument. Sal loves guitarists like Sonny Landreth and Derek Trucks, his slide playing references those guys undoubtedly. Stu our drummer cut his teeth with blues, and he brings that to his playing in these songs. Jodi is a folky at heart, but she's studying for her master's in music at the moment, and is really getting into a lot of choral work. So, there is a real mixed bag of influences and styles that go into the pot with the band.

**Aldora Britain Records:** A broad question to finish. There have been a lot of changes in the world in the post-COVID era, both throughout society, with political turmoil and even bloodshed in Ukraine and Palestine, and within the music industry too, AI for example. How would you say these several years have impacted you, both personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both for the good and the bad?

**Steve:** I guess the thing that was the real game changer for the industry was COVID, and how that impacted on how we listen to music. I think it fuelled the fire for things like Spotify and the streaming platforms, and that has

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changed forever how people find and listen to music. Sure, music has become more accessible, but there is just so much stuff out there that it is getting harder and harder to find ways to get your music in front of people.

The political issues, although I am deeply concerned about those things and have strong personal views about them, I don't respond to them as a songwriter. The world has always been full of artists writing protest songs, from Bob Dylan onwards, and there are enough songwriters out there still writing about those big issues, I figure the world doesn't need another one. Instead, I've begun to look inwards, at the stories of little people, and their day to day lives, however bleak and troubled they may be. AI is just a complete mystery to me. I just can't contemplate using it or engaging with it in any way. That's probably a reflection more of my age, and I know it is going to be in our faces forever now. But I'll try to avoid it as long as possible!

## Quickfire Round

**AB Records:** Favourite artist or band? **Steve:** The Beatles. **Sal:** The Beatles. **Jeff:** Alan Jackson. **Stu:** Average White Band.

**AB Records:** Favourite album? **Steve:** *Abbey Road*. **Sal:** David Bowie, *Hunky Dory*. **Jeff:** *Good Time*, Alan Jackson. **Stu:** Average White Band, 1974 release.

**AB Records:** First album you bought with your own money? **Steve:** *Fresh Cream*, Cream. **Sal:** Beatles, *The White Album*. **Jeff:** Rick Wakeman, *Six Wives of Henry the Eighth*. **Stu:** *Aftermath*, Rolling Stones.

**AB Records:** Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Steve:** Robert Plant, *Saving Grace*. **Sal:** Lloyd Cole and the Commoions, *Rattlesnakes*. **Jeff:** Alan Jackson, *Good Time*. **Stu:** Eagles, *The Complete Greatest Hits*.



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**AB Records:** First gig as an audience member? **Steve:** Herman's Hermits and Tom Jones and The Purple Hearts. **Sal:** The Beatles, Festival Hall, Brisbane. **Jeff:** Bob Dylan, Brisbane. **Stu:** Beach Boys.

**AB Records:** Loudest gig as an audience member? **Steve:** Billy Thorpe in a small Brisbane venue. **Sal:** The Angels at Festival Hall, Brisbane. **Jeff:** Jeff Lang at Solbar, Sunshine Coast. **Stu:** Billy Thorpe, same gig as Steve.

**AB Records:** Style icon? **Steve:** Gram Parsons for his Nudie suits. **Sal:** Bryan Ferry is and has always been the epitome of cool and yeah, mysterious. **Jeff:** Urban Bogan. Ha! **Stu:** Bruce Willis.

**AB Records:** Favourite film? **Steve:** *The Great Escape*. **Sal:** *Shawshank Redemption*. **Jeff:** *The Green Mile*. **Stu:** *Anchorman*.

**AB Records:** Favourite TV show? **Steve:** *Slow Horses*. **Sal:** *Shetland* or the new *Maigret*. **Jeff:** *Grand Designs*. **Stu:** *Department Q*.

**AB Records:** Favourite up and coming artist or band? **Steve:** Minor Gold. **Sal:** Sonny Gullage. **Jeff:** Lane Pittman. **Stu:** Teskey Brothers.



# No More Statements

Worldly singer-songwriter **Kirsti Meiers** is fresh from releasing a superb new album, *Seven Stories*, a collection that delves deep into her creative personality. This is a set that emphasises the transformative power of music, with an array of styles and genres coming together to underline Kirsti's acute lyrical observations. The result is a collection of songs that are energised and excited, performed with an earthiness and grit that allows a richly alternative vein to shine. A mature and developed record, and a high watermark from this Scandinavian singer-songwriter. And as the buzz and excitement surrounding *Seven Stories* continues to gradually build, Kirsti sat down for a chat with *Aldora Britain Records* about her life in story and song so far. We discussed popular original compositions from her back-catalogue, her growth and evolution as an artist over the years, current big influences and inspirations, and much, much more. That exclusive in-depth conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

Keep up to date with Kirsti Meiers [HERE](#). Listen to Kirsti Meiers [HERE](#).

And please don't forget to send a magazine-sized donation to Aldora Britain Records [HERE](#).



**Aldora Britain Records:** Hello Kirsti, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic artist from over in Scandinavia. 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?

**Kirsti Meiers:** Dear Tom! I couldn't agree more, music sure brings us together, it's such a true beauty of being alive. Maybe even the reason we are? I think music, understood in a broad sense, plays a huge role in the evolution both phylogenetically and ontogenetically to just throw in such a crazy comment just from the beginning.

To hear from you, Tom, is truly moving, thank you for taking the time to listen and to get back to me. Thank you for putting your time and effort into making people stay

connected via music presented by *Aldora*. You ask me how I am. I'm good. I hope you are too! Personally, I'm tired after a few harsh years in my life. But I'm hopeful and somehow relieved. It's a weird journey, life. Like everyone I'm trying to keep the hope alive for a better world. If we lose hope and trust in humanity we are lost. We are connected and I guess that in these days we have to move closer together, share what unites us, music and art have a crucial role here for us to survive.

At this point I had to pause the writing in order to keep the fire in my fireplace burning. It's the first time this autumn I make a fire, and I had to rebuild the logs in order to make it burn properly. I can't help taking it a bit personally when the fire dies. It's a bit crappy, right? Having trouble making a fire which is one of the most basic things that you need to be able to do in order to survive as a human being. We've been doing it for thousands of years. I kind of think, make a fire, bake bread and break just a few of the traumas that you carry with you, that's all we need to do as humans. And then look after the group. Share the love.

Okay, now it's back, burning again! Lovely. And I just realised that the fire and me, that's exactly what's on the front cover of my album. And it is one of my favourite places to be, near the fire. That's where we humans told stories and stay connected since forever. And kind of what I thought of doing with this record. So, let's dive into it, I'll tell you about the stories behind the songs that somehow travelled across the water and reached you.

So, back in the days, my mom sold her life insurance to buy a piano for our home. It's been a story that's kind of been hanging around in my family, but I didn't really understand it until recently, that it was actually a fact. I

“Anyhow, that’s the beginning. Me and my piano. I was quite lonely in dealing with the stuff that happened around me, so just hanging out at the piano was my way of getting through.”

realised how truly amazing and heartbreaking that is, also in the light of how my mother’s life turned out. So, I was around three years old when the piano then arrived in the living room at the farm where I grew up on the little island called Lolland. I started playing, just hanging out at the piano constantly and I am told that I played with both hands, melody and chords, when I was four. So, the piano and I got close from very early on. And it’s been my go-to ever since.

Childhood was kind of heavy, our younger sister suffered from leukaemia, and when she was sent home from hospital because they couldn’t do more, it became clear that our mother had developed cancer and she then died a few years later. My younger sister survived. We are four sisters and it’s kind of a weird childhood where a lot of quite bad strategies developed. Anyhow, that’s the beginning. Me and my piano. I was quite lonely in dealing with the stuff that happened around me, so just hanging out at the piano was my way of getting through.

I remember my father telling me that he could hear me play the piano and my singing all the way out from the living room, through the garden and out on the road. He just stated it, he seemed a bit surprised and there were no judgement or hints that I ought to play softer, at least not something I picked up. I just remember thinking, ‘Oh, that’s loud then,’ and then I continued. So, I’m grateful for not being told to take up less space when it comes to my music. If you are self-aware, it’s impossible to communicate from the heart.

I remember longing for the piano when visiting my family in Norway every summer. None of them played any instruments. Someone had an electric organ with a rhythm section and pedals, you know, it was fun, but I was literally dying inside, longing for the sound of the piano, the big body of resonating, the reverb that travels out in the room, into me and further out in the universe and nothing stops it. And since no one else in the family had that kind of need to be close to music-making I felt a bit weird. I sat at my grandmother’s massive wooden table in her kitchen and imagined it was my piano.

**Aldora Britain Records:** And now, let’s take a leap forward to the present day and your brilliant solo output. I am definitely drawn in by your songwriting and songcraft. How do you approach this part of your creative process? Are you drawn to specific themes or topics? Perhaps coming from more of a personal, observational or even fictional perspective or point of view?



“The songs they kind of arrive as a line, a theme sometimes attached to a melodic phrase. And I’m there to bring them into the world. They need to get into the shape of music. They arrive from experiences or observations of life that can’t lay still with me.”

**Kirsti Meiers:** Thanks! Haha! This is great. Well, the songs they kind of arrive as a line, a theme sometimes attached to a melodic phrase. And I’m there to bring them into the world. They need to get into the shape of music. They arrive from experiences or observations of life that can’t lay still with me. Yeah, it is like a bodily unease, I have to get it out to move through it. And I help them find a shape so I can communicate their message. The songs come from being in touch with life, shit that happens, stuff I don’t understand, things that are important to me.

Music composition and arrangement wise, it’s like a need, the feeling, the themes of the songs demand to be matched with the right sound, rhythm, timbre. Emotion means ‘in motion’, something that moves. There is no feeling without a bodily match, that’s why it needs to be turned into music to be ‘worked through’, experienced as music, resonated with. In that way the music works as a bridge between the subject and the way to handle it, walk on, cry on, sing on, play on, dance on, strengthen me, make me wiser, and eventually take with me on stage. And what happens there is another beautiful experience, when people read their lives into what they hear.

Lyric wise, it’s like a crossword puzzle. That’s where technicality comes in. Together with practicing fingers and voice. So, lyric wise, there’s a lot of thinking involved, it’s a real kick to be able to ‘solve the puzzle’ and place it in the arms of the music and voice and then later arrange it. I kind of hear a lot of it, the arrangement around, when I write the song, and quite often I have like an inner music video.

Although I always know what I want, it can take some time, sometimes I just have to rest it for days, weeks, or months. When driving my car, I often hit a limbo of existence, a kind of nowhere land where things then can come to me instead of me haunting them. That’s where I often get solutions to problems. But mostly it’s like that word puzzle or a math problem, it’s just work but rewarding of course. I sit there evening after evening, make drafts, compare it with the memos from the car! I keep all the old versions in my folder. Especially one song on my next album, an EP about leaving a not so healthy relationship, has been really hard to get right. But now I’m there. I just need to get some money to record it.



“I always enjoyed being on stage on my own, but I just kind of started to long after not being alone, wanted to hook up with more people of humanity. So, going into the studio was great, or to be real it felt like a blessing for a lot of reasons.”

**Aldora Britain Records:** You are fresh from the release of a superb new record called *Seven Stories*. This was also my introduction to your music, so it already holds a special place in my record collection. What are your memories from writing, recording and releasing it, and how would you say you grew and evolved as an artist throughout this process?

**Kirsti Meiers:** Thanks again, Tom. I really appreciate your kind words. Well, I’m not sure I grew as an artist throughout this process, but I definitely grew as a human being who is here to bring music into the world. Or is that being an artist? For a long time, I didn’t think of myself as a singer, but I think I’m getting more comfortable with that description now. It’s just that I never took any lessons or thought of me as a singer, I just sang and played the piano since forever. My latest approach that felt very bold in the beginning is that, okay, I’m probably a singer because I actually do sing. So, maybe I’m an artist as well. I guess an artist is one who insists on bringing art into the world and cares for the idea and the piece that we are working on, as was it a homeless child. Someone who receives to give it a form and put it back in the world?

Anyway! To answer your question, I remember once, only once, when doing some recording in the studio and I had to insist so hard in order to have the others realise that they can suggest things, but they can’t decide. After ten minutes I heard myself tell the fellas, ‘This is my music, this is my song and that’s why I get to decide.’ It was just a shitty thing about how they thought a line in the horn arrangement should sound instead of what I intended, but that was not up for discussion. I wrote it like that, there’s a reason for it. And it just really pissed me off that they didn’t suggest but just agreed with each other and that their idea was better and wanted to go with that. I must say, though to their defence, that this is the only time this happened, it never happened until this day, and not after! Haha! Looking back on that episode I realise that it was a crucial challenge, necessary for me to experience, to defend and stand up for what I create, for what’s important. That sure made me grow. Back off. I’m the mother.

The songs on the record are a collection of, well, things that happened, situations that occurred between 2019, ‘Room for Spring’, and the latest song was, I guess, the Danish one, ‘Krasser (Komplekse følelser)’. A few songs were too heavy to be on this record, and I decided to move them and give them their own album, an EP, that will hopefully be out during the first half of 2026.

The album *Seven Stories* came about as I went into the studio with the aim of just getting some support from amazing Peter Bohlin to make some easy draft and sheet music to hand to my future – still imaginary! – bandmates. Then, quite quickly I realised that, okay, these recordings are not just sketching of the arrangements, I can’t stop myself, I want to produce, and Peter was up for it. It turned out we had a great studio chemistry. Until this point I spent quite a few years on my own on stage and in production, performed as a one-woman band with my looper, Boss Roland 505, and a crazy heavy Fender Rhodes, but that’s just the way they come and I love it too. I just dealt with everything myself on and off stage, dealing with my old VW bus that broke down all the time, producing my record in apartment, and of course being a mom for my two kids and freelancing being the only money getter in the household. My song ‘Supermom’ on my first album is about that.

I always enjoyed being on stage on my own, but I just kind of started to long after not being alone, wanted to hook up with more people of humanity. So, going into the studio was great, or to be real it felt like a blessing for a lot of reasons. And I got hired for a few years as a music therapist, so I could actually go to a studio and pay for it! Peter and I have been laughing, crying, and been on top of the world when we succeed in getting just the right sound that we were aiming for.

A great memory of music’s ability to heal is when my friend Sofi Hellborg, who is a saxophone player and happened to be one of Sweden’s greatest Afro funk musicians, joined me in the studio on the song called ‘Krasser (Komplekse følelser)’. It’s, as I said, the only track in Danish on the record, and it’s a song about realising that what you thought you could count on in a relationship that has been with you the most of your life,

“We kept on and on ... this is really where I want to be in that song, alive, in that lovely craziness, just letting go of hesitations, giving into fun, pushing it, like a physical play in the garden on one of the first days of spring.”

is not present. As a close friend she knows my story behind the song, we have talked about it, lived through it together, but as she played her solo in the studio I just started crying, not even feeling it coming. It just hit me so hard. Spot on in the heart. I felt so touched by the arrangement coming together and then Sofi is there playing such a power by light into the song on top of that. Everything came together and something in me started healing in a new way.

I remember recording ‘Possible’ and not feeling that the horn player and I was able to reach that playful, crazy unhinged connection that I wanted to be present. This is what the song is about, that it’s possible, it’s a celebration of life and it’s supposed to be played out in the duet between the scat song and the horn. I know, it’s – probably! – not a feeling you can just pour out of your horn, with a fellow musician you met for the first time and the situation in the studio is weird because you didn’t get to record it as an improvised duet, but Björn would add things on top of my scat and also having some empty bars to go crazy.

Anyway, we kept on and on – sorry Björn! – and in the end it turned out really well. I might have watched too much *Muppet Show* as a child! If that’s even possible... no pun intended! But this is really where I want to be in that song, alive, in that lovely craziness, just letting go of hesitations, giving into fun, pushing it, like a physical play in the garden on one of the first days of spring, as you were Animal, just toss around, almost die of laughter, that kind of being with another human being. I guess being a child or playing with a child gets that out in you, but it’s possible and recommendable for grown-ups as well.

Originally, I wrote the song with a trombone in mind, and at the release I hired the great Göran Abelli, who is a local trombonist. We – or maybe mostly me!? – had so much fun. I really pushed him! Haha! It’s supposed to be a replay of musical connection between musicians. I’m still to experience someone that pushes back with the same amount of power and playfulness that I want to be present, so if any of you out there are up to it, join me on stage next time and let’s play!

**Aldora Britain Records:** I would now like to pick out two personal favourites from the record, ‘Bring in the Clowns’ and ‘Left Undead’. 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?



“I’m still to experience someone that pushes back with the same amount of power and playfulness that I want to be present, so if any of you out there are up to it, join me on stage next time and let’s play!”

**Kirsti Meiers:** I love hearing what songs people are into. Thanks! When joining the Kirsti Meiers fan-club at sleeve.fm, the Animal-tier, you can watch a video where I explain the story behind ‘Left Undead’. But that’s in Danish, so let’s do this for the English listeners. Also, I’ll give you some more details. So, I never told this officially, but originally ‘Left Undead’ was written after a telephone conversation with my father. He is a man of a generation where often men consider their feelings, and therefore often other’s feelings, of not being subjects of investigation or even validation. So, when he is disappointed, he gets angry, and one time he wanted to leave his partner he’d been seeing for fifteen years, he wanted to just throw it all away. He couldn’t hear my words, he just wanted to leave it all.

In Danish, we use the term ‘baroque’ if something is weird or off. As we talked, I had this inner vision of what he told me was a stupid scene of dressed up characters with oversize dresses, unpleasant to wear but so important to fit in the weird age of baroque. Old fashioned way of being. Outdated. Loads of white powder in the face, just far, far away from what’s natural, what’s good for you. Pretentious. Maybe. Therefore, the first recorded version of the song I played the cembalo, you can hear an excerpt of this in the above-mentioned video at Sleeve.fm. Years and years later, the song has shifted into many other meanings. It plays in the back of my head when I am about to leave something out of protest. So, it’s a song about making sure that you are not leaving or giving up on something just because you can. Maybe even giving communication a try, things are better when they’re said. Leave it undead, don’t kill it. Don’t go away.

‘Bring in the Clowns’ originates from my experience with a collaboration I had with an organisation that was quite unethical, unprofessional, pretentious. I called them out, and I needed a way for myself to deal with what I went through and realised that they were just... clowns. They didn’t want to hurt anyone, they just couldn’t do better. Standing on the shoulders of each other to impress the boss, doing their stunt-rhyming on the boss is a c\*\*\*. But I don’t sing that. That’s for you listeners to figure out... well, now you know!



*Photo by Lars H. Knudsen.*

“I really just want to make a space for us humans to strengthen our experience, makes us remember that we are one. That we are connected. And we realise that when we are immersed in music.”

I feel a huge relief when singing the song. Re-establishing some gut feeling that you may traded away because you could not believe what was actually going on. It was too far out. I think the song helps me to rebuild some trust again in your gut feeling so that you when you meet a clown again, and you will, are able to navigate, kick in, do your thing. And why not use the song just as a quick reminder, a check, a look inwards to reflect upon the colour of your one own nose these days, have I said sorry? Am I a good listener? What can I do better? We are probably all clowns at the end of the day. But keep real, stick to your intuition is the message of the song. See them for what they are. Clowns.



**Aldora Britain Records:** When I listen to your recorded output, I definitely get the impression that you would put on an unforgettable live show. I am picturing a captivating, immersive performance of story and song. Is this something that you do? If so, what do you aim to bring to the stage as an artist, and what can a fan expect from their very first Kirsti Meiers live show?

**Kirsti Meiers:** I play music in order to tell a story, and whatever that takes, I'm going give it. So, if it's a song about daring to live life as if you were Animal from the *Muppet Show*, I will sing is that way, with power of life as well as longing after serenity, faith in hope. If I sing about a childhood that I spent as a grizzly bear in the woods instead of with my human family, I will sing and tell it with that vulnerability. So yeah, people report being quite captivated. Some describe it as a cabaret

like performance, I guess I'm just as alive as my songs. And people tell me how they relate to the songs in the way that they play out in their lives. That is just great when the music is in the room, the resonance that makes us connect, even though we don't know each other or each other's stories.

Sometimes I have a setlist, but just as often I don't as I want to match what's going on in the audience and in me. I often ask the audience to join in on a line or two. After a while as we are turning into a choir and people feel safe. I then move away from the mic and the keys and let the voices of the room sound, make us hear 'us'. I really just want to make a space for us humans to strengthen our experience, makes us remember that we are one. That we are connected. And we realise that when we are immersed in music.

When I sing 'Bring in the Clowns', I invite people to imagine that they have a small size hologram of a free of choice clown from their life and suggest that they place their clown hologram up on the stage. So, after a while, we imagine all of those clowns are standing there next to the piano and I'll sing the song. We get an opportunity to just look at them clowns from another angle. Get some distance and see them for what they are. At my latest show I asked my friend to join me on stage with a nose and bring one for me. A little bit of introspection is never wrong.

**Aldora Britain Records:** I have been doing some digging over on Bandcamp, leading me back to 2018's *Not without a Song*. This is another exceptional snapshot of you as an artist. Thank you for the music. How do you reflect on this outing as a whole now, and is there anything that you would edit or change when looking back with the benefit of hindsight?

**Kirsti Meiers:** Oh, that's great to hear, thanks! That album, *Not without a Song*, was my debut, and as I told you earlier, I recorded it in my living room. Well, the process was important. Doing it on my own was. But I regret that the sound quality isn't better. Also being a crap PR person, I had no idea how to get it out in the right channels. That's still hard, though, to be the PR guy when you are definitely not a PR guy.

“I’m not sure how it came along. It’s a special mix of a lot of weird stuff ... I would as a very young girl love to listen to the church organ at services ... But I was always disappointed that people didn’t just sing in harmony, I wanted to and did it quietly.”

I would like to record some of the songs again with the great guitarist Peter Tegnér with whom I did a few interpretations with earlier this summer. It was lovely to hear where he took the songs, and we got worked up to do some more stuff together.

**Aldora Britain Records:** As you well know by now, I love that Kirsti Meiers sound and your approach to making and creating music. That folky, rootsy, worldly foundation. Superb. 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?

**Kirsti Meiers:** Aw, you break my heart, thanks! I’m not sure how it came along. It’s a special mix of a lot of weird stuff, growing up in a religious tradition, I had to leave as a teenager, I would as a very young girl love to listen to the church organ at services, being in that whole, body experience of sound. But I was always disappointed that people didn’t just sing in harmony, I wanted to and did it quietly, but it felt so disappointing that they seemed to stop themselves from making it a great musical experience. Why didn’t they sing harmonies I thought to myself? I think that’s why I love using the looper, making choirs where I belong and make others belong.



I always find it really hard to pinpoint who inspired me. I realise that I don’t have a very developed knowledge of contemporary mainstream artists and records that ‘one should know’. People go like, ‘What, don’t you recognise or don’t you know or haven’t you seen?’ I think I pick up a lot of stuff from radio and stuff and I had from my older sisters around who would play their records of that time, which was the 80s. What I do know though is that I have been listening a lot to Björk, her first maybe five records. I have been told that the song ‘Possible’ reminds listeners of her ‘It’s Oh So Quiet’, and I hear why. It was not deliberate, but I love that song and of course when falling in love that is a go-to song. I love Prince. I love Maceo Parker. Missy Elliot. Rickie Lee Jones.

Joni Mitchell, of course, is with me. Actually, I considered never releasing the song ‘Making Room for Spring’ because I was afraid that people would accuse me of deliberately trying to do a Joni Mitchell piece of work and that was not my intention, it just came out that way. But when I heard it after I finished, I got so embarrassed. My friend Jens Lodén insisted that it definitely had a place in the world. Cheers to friends. Obviously, Carole King, my first love within the singer-songwriter tradition, is a foundation of my musicality. I love the sound of the 70s. I love the drummer Russ Kunkel who I think sometimes played for King? I love the voice of James Taylor who composed and sang a lot with Carole King. An album of Jackson Browne is often on repeat as well as Harry Nilsson’s version of ‘Without You’. I just realized today that he didn’t write it and I have to go and listen to the original.

There’s something about that time of age, the 70s. And yes, I’m also born in the late 70s, so I plunged out into that world of sound. And of course, *Muppet Show* came along with that cool music and wonderful including and loving vibe. Burt Bacharach must have flooded out of some radios, and I picked it up. In my Christian upbringing, this ‘worldly music’ was not really appreciated though, so it’s been a bit of a guilty pleasure.

The Danish Shit & Chalou with only female musicians was important, and of course as you can probably tell, Tori Amos. Her broad expression, both in the piano and in her range of voice, the life that she communicates, her power that she is not hiding. The fact that her rage and her power is just as natural as the beauty and

**“Music is more important than ever ... music and art play a crucial role in getting the world back on a better track. That is music made by humans.”**

softness, soothes my broken teenage heart that left the family's religious worldview. Piano-wise I have been playing quite a lot of classical music with Edvard Grieg being one of my absolute favourites. He is Norwegian like my mum was and I can hear some folkish fifths in his music that I absolutely love. An obvious go-to is 'Wedding day at Trollhagen' with its beautiful middle piece with a whole other feeling than the theme. My mum would sometimes play cassettes with Norwegian fele (folk violin) in the kitchen when my Danish dad was not in. I loved it. It put her in a mood of playfulness that I rarely saw, and loved, but at the same time having that music in the kitchen also kind of made it obvious how far away from home she was and probably felt.

**Aldora Britain Records:** A broad question to finish. There have been a lot of changes in the world in the post-COVID era, both throughout society, with political turmoil and even bloodshed in Ukraine and Palestine, and within the music industry too, AI for example. How would you say these several years have impacted you, both personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both for the good and the bad?

**Kirsti Meiers:** Thanks for asking. These are such important questions. I think the inlay details of my CD is available to read at Bandcamp? What it basically says is that it took me six years to release what came next, the song 'Room for Spring'. This is because since writing it, during spring 2019, the world has just spiralled into more and more reasons to despair, just as you list in your question. It felt wrong to release a song of hope and faith with everything going on in our world.

I end up with the answer to your question and even to myself is that music is more important than ever, that music and art play a crucial role in getting the world back on a better track. That is music made by humans. I follow and support the Palestinian music teacher Ahmedmuin Abuamsha that founded and runs the collective Gaza Birds Singing. He makes music out of the noise of drones, together with the children attending his music classes that never are cancelled despite hunger, death, flooding. He is worth supporting in his endless effort to give the children a community to be held by music in the dread of the genocide.

I feel like that since the pandemic and definitely the last two years so many processes that seemed to be just simmering have boiled up and become urgent to respond to. To take a stand for real. With the information I have about Spotify it was not possible for me to keep my music on the platform, and I cancelled our subscription just this month. It's been a bit of a weird release, though, because the distributor had problems getting my music out in time to the rest of the platforms I choose, so at the moment my album is only on Bandcamp and Sleeve.fm. These technical problems kind of made me think a lot about where to place my music, who owns and makes money on my music, and not at least to make sure that the platforms don't train AI on the music I create. Things are just becoming more confusing as I realised a few days ago that Apple and Deezer are tied to the American presidency, so I guess I will have to withdraw my coming distribution from those platforms as well.

Guess where you can find me is live, buy a CD, Bandcamp, Sleeve.fm as well as on Tidal, Pandora, and Qoboz. I also removed my music from YouTube, which are complicit in removing material that can confirm the war crimes carried out in Palestine. I felt a sense of hope when it comes to using AI when I listened to the DC comics president Jim Lee stating this, 'DC comics will not support AI generated storytelling or art. Not now, not ever, as long as Anna Depies and I are in charge. It's the imperfect mind, the creative risk, the hand-drawn gesture that no algorithm can replicate. And when I draw, I make mistakes, a lot of them. But that's the point. The smudge, the rough line, the hesitation, that's me in the work. That's my journey, that's what makes it come alive. That's why human creativity matters. AI doesn't dream. It doesn't feel, doesn't make art. It aggregates it. Our job as creators, as storytellers, and as publishers is to make people feel something real. That's why we create and that's why we're still here.'

This made such a huge impression on me. Music is here because we are humans. That's why AI generated music is not art but a made-up replica of art. I think in the future, people will go even further to go to a concert,

pay for music in order to feel the connection to humanity. People need to feel that they are connected with other human beings. The world needs us to unite as well. That's why music is probably on its uprising, even it is at the same time threatened more than ever. God, can't believe we are here! Like in a dystopian future. But let's bring it on. I'm ready for a fight of a lifetime for humanity. But honestly, Tom, how did we get here so quick? It feels like I had my first Nokia last week!

## Quickfire Round

**AB Records:** Favourite artist or band? **Kirsti:** Tori Amos. But I also want to choose Sofi Hellborg.

**AB Records:** Favourite album? **Kirsti:** *The Tony Bennett / Bill Evans Album*. **AB Records:** First album you bought with your own money? **Kirsti:** Tomas Ledin, *Tillfäldigheternas Spel*, together with the single by Mr Big, 'To Be with You'! Haha!

**AB Records:** Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Kirsti:** Sinéad O Connor's debut album, *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*.

**AB Records:** First gig as an audience member? **Kirsti:** Probably a classical concert with my father in a church, does that count? **AB Records:** Loudest gig as an audience member? **Kirsti:** Probably the Danish rock band Kashmir at Skanderborg Festivalen in Denmark.

**AB Records:** Style icon? **Kirsti:** Depending on what I'm doing its ranging from Patsy Stone (*Absolutely Fabulous*) to grungy, it was my youth, no compromise and big boots, to lately seemingly turning into a kind of Amish looking style with long dresses in wool slash Hobbit home-wear, knitted jumpers and comfiness. Clothes that are quick and easy to put on and warm me up quickly after a swim in the Ocean (Öresund). When I'm on stage I'm barefoot although I would love to enter in high heels, but I'm too comfy and clumsy, which closes the circle and brings us back to Patsy Stone with a stage twist of cabaret. So, within that spectrum. Sorry, can't make it shorter.

**AB Records:** Favourite film? **Kirsti:** *Blade Runner*. **AB Records:** Favourite TV show? **Kirsti:** The Norwegian TV show *Pørni*.

**AB Records:** Favourite up and coming artist or band? **Kirsti:** Sorry, but I don't have a clue! Unfortunately, I'm up my own a\*\* at the moment, not reaching a lot out to concerts or festivals, but I do listen to the radio when driving and the last thing I Shazamed was Cleo Sols, 'Fear When You Fly'. That song made a huge impression on me. Doing a quick search on her now I realise she is not an upcoming artist, with her fifth album out now, but she is new to me. Great sound.



# Change the Tides

Australian troubadour **Zac Henderson** creates all-original songs from a rootsy indie folk foundation. This has certainly been captured throughout his two latest offerings, 'Fever' and 'Suzie', dextrous and propulsive tasters from his upcoming record, *Change the Tides*, to be released January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026. These outings loom large and entice listeners in, bringing a new perspective to Zac's work, covering both more noir spaces and upbeat shuffles. Each track wades in with a natural excitement and colourful vigour, building momentum behind *Change the Tides*' eventual release. And as this date draws ever closer, Zac took a brief respite from his creative endeavours to chat with *Aldora Britain Records* about his artistic adventures so far. We discussed the long-lasting impact of the COVID era, early musical memories from his youth, his unique and individual approach to songwriting and songcraft, and much, much more. That exclusive in-depth conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

Keep up to date with Zac Henderson [HERE](#). Listen to Zac Henderson [HERE](#).

And please don't forget to send a magazine-sized donation to Aldora Britain Records [HERE](#).

**Aldora Britain Records:** Hello Zac, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic artist from over in Tasmania. 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?

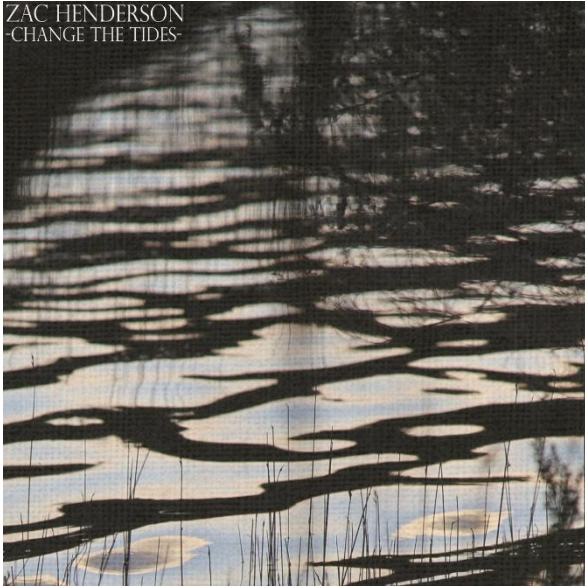
**Zac Henderson:** I'd say my earliest memories are of my grandmother playing piano in the living room and tinkering on the keys whenever we would visit.

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



“I have always enjoyed just playing with words and stories. Sometimes they stem from real encounters, sometimes from people watching, sometimes from my imagination and fictional musings, I try to keep ready to catch a song whenever they may come.”

**Zac Henderson:** I don't think there's any specific thing that inspires me. I have always enjoyed just playing with words and stories. Sometimes they stem from real encounters, sometimes from people watching, sometimes from my imagination and fictional musings, I try to keep ready to catch a song whenever they may come, whatever they may be about.



**Aldora Britain Records:** You are currently preparing for the release of an exciting new record called *Change the Tides*. I cannot wait to listen to this one from start to finish. Not long to wait now! What are your memories from writing and recording it, and how would you say you grew and evolved as an artist throughout this process?

**Zac Henderson:** The songs came from different times over the last few years, some more recent than others. A lot of this album was written during the lockdowns with the exception of some songs which were written while touring. The album was recorded in a wonderful studio, 'Frying Pan' in Tasmania, and the process of recording was awesome. Most of the album was recorded live with my band with some overdubs afterwards. I think as always when recording the challenges that arise often shape the way you view your songs and

performances. This particular album was relatively easy to record as the band I work with are all incredible to understanding my ideas and approach to song.

**Aldora Britain Records:** I would like to focus on your most recent song releases now, the superb 'Suzie' and 'Fever'. Two Henderson gems! 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 of each?

**Zac Henderson:** Sure, 'Suzie' was written while staying in a BNB during the recording of my last album. I was laying in bed, playing around on my guitar, when I received a phone call from a private number. I answered the call and the voice on the line said, 'Hello, I'm Suzie and I am calling from (such and such a company).' I immediately sang the first lyrics of the song down the line, 'Suzie, you called me, on a private number.' She hung up the call, and I continued to write a song. If she's out there somewhere, thanks for the inspiration!

'Fever' is a strange one for me as it kind of touches on a few things in my life. In some ways the song is about giving yourself to someone you love and the compromise that can come with that, and in some ways, it is about substance and the way it can cloud your life and become a release and a barrier, much like love itself.

**Aldora Britain Records:** When I listen to your recorded output, I definitely get the impression that you would put on an unforgettable live show. I am picturing a captivating performance of story and song, for sure. Is this something that you do? If so, what do you aim to bring to the stage as an artist, and what can a fan expect from their very first Zac Henderson live show?

**Zac Henderson:** Thank you for saying so! I certainly try to get my storytelling across. To be honest it depends on the day as to how I perform. Sometimes I engage more with the audiences, and other times I like to think I just let the songs themselves do the heavy lifting. I try to combine as many varying songs as I can into a performance to keep it moving and keep those listening engaged.

“I think as always when recording the challenges that arise often shape the way you view your songs and performances. This particular album was relatively easy to record as the band I work with are all incredible to understanding my ideas and approach to song.”

**Aldora Britain Records:** I have been doing some crate-digging on Bandcamp, leading me back to 2021's *Lay the Stones*. This is another superb snapshot of you as an artist. Thank you for the music! How do you reflect on this collection as a whole now, and is there anything that you would edit or change when looking back with the benefit of hindsight?

**Zac Henderson:** I loved creating this album, there's not much I would change about it to be honest. The process of recording it was amazing. We made it in a little old bakery converted into a recording studio in country Victoria with an amazing producer, Greg Walker, who has recorded some of my favourite Australian albums. The main thing I would change is something I couldn't control, by the time it was ready for release the world had stood still due to COVID. I seriously considered holding out to release it but I just wanted to share it and so I did, but I do wish I had had the opportunity to tour with it. But this time I get to do that with my new album and make up for it, so hopefully it all works!

**Aldora Britain Records:** As you well know by now, I love that Henderson sound and your approach to making and creating music. That relatable alternative and indie folk foundation. 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?

**Zac Henderson:** It certainly developed over time. I played in a band, The Surreal Estate Agents, for years writing and performing with them. I sang differently in that band, and as much as I loved playing that style, I started to really want to explore my own voice and introspective writing some more. So, when things slowed down with those guys, I think that's when I really started to hone into my craft as an individual musician. A big one was 'rediscovering' my voice and starting to sing more authentically to my true voice.

**Aldora Britain Records:** A broad question to finish. There have been a lot of changes in the world in the post-COVID era, both throughout society, with political turmoil, even bloodshed in Ukraine and Palestine, and within the music industry too, AI for example. How would you say these years have impacted you, both personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both the good and bad?



“It wasn't all bad and I learnt a lot about patience and myself. I slowed down and I took my time. It gave me some time to think and reflect on what's important to me.”

**Zac Henderson:** Much like many people it has affected me pretty significantly. It's only now that I am starting to re-engage with the idea of touring and travelling with music. However, it wasn't all bad and I learnt a lot about patience and myself. I slowed down and I took my time. It gave me some time to think and reflect on what's important to me and I'm not sure I'd have had that time if it wasn't for lockdowns. But now it's all over and I'm ready to hit the ground running!

## Quickfire Round

**AB Records:** Favourite artist or band? **Zac:** So hard to answer, there are simply too many to name!

**AB Records:** Favourite album? **Zac:** Also so hard, close contenders, *Closing Time* by Tom Waits, *Meddle* by Pink Floyd, John Prine's self-titled, *36 Chambers* by Wu-Tang.

**AB Records:** First album you bought with your own money? **Zac:** Led Zeppelin, *Zeppelin III*.

**AB Records:** Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Zac:** *Bruised Orange*, John Prine.

**AB Records:** First gig as an audience member? **Zac:** Lenny Kravitz, The Cranberries, and Wolfmother.

**AB Records:** Loudest gig as an audience member? **Zac:** Ghostface Killah

**AB Records:** Style icon? **Zac:** Oh man, hmm, I mean Bowie was pretty stylish, wasn't he?

**AB Records:** Favourite film? **Zac:** *The Lighthouse*.

**AB Records:** Favourite TV show? **Zac:** *Breaking Bad*.

**AB Records:** Favourite up and coming artist or band? **Zac:** Woolworths Flu-Shot.



# Tonight, The Streets Are Ours

Richard Hawley with John Smith at De Montfort Hall, Leicester, Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> 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, recreational matches of cricket and football raged on in the neighbouring 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 Orbison shades, and his 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.

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 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

“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.”

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, newbies and oldies perfectly interplaying, 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                          |



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