

Hello all and a belated happy holidays. Believe it or not, things are progressing on the web site but it will still be a while. As you know I am producing the new Liz Phair album which is going great and will be out later this year. I think we will be finished in a couple of months and then ...well I don't know. I will either start my next record or I might take another production or soundtrack before beginning but I promise it won't be too long.

I will keep you posted and will try to check in with the list more often than I have in the past year. Thanks to Spencer for keeping this going and thanks so much to all of you for your support.

Q - I recall hearing about material for a third album that would've been released on RCA right after "Free-for-All," but was ultimately scrapped amidst the record label crappola, with a new batch of songs written for "Resigned." Have you/do you plan to ever release any of those songs? What title/cover art would you have considered for the work?

A - Some melodic and lyrical ideas were put back in the pot but I just left those songs behind. I never recorded them and I didn't get close to conceiving of it as an album.

Q - Which of your albums is your personal favorite? Why?

A - Always the last one. Because it is the last one. I suppose it's a matter of the themes of the songs being closer to where I am in my life.

Q - Any plans to visit other sections of the country? World? (Spencer - lots of requests for Texas, Canada, Europe)?

A - No plans at the moment. The fact is that it takes quite a bit of money to put on a tour and if you lack the support of a record company it is hard to make a tour financially solvent anywhere but the concentrated east and west coast. That leaves as the only option a solo acoustic show. The lack of overhead might make that a possibility. I have been thinking about doing a solo acoustic show in Europe this summer but as none of my records have been released there (save the first) I am not sure if there is an audience.

Q - Which of your songs do you think is the best written? (I don't necessarily mean your favorite, but which you think is the song that's currently the peak of your abilities.)

A - I have no idea

Q - When did you first learn of the Chamberlin? How did you discover it? Are there any Chamberlin recordings you would recommend? Is there any chance of you and Patrick recording an instrumental album?

A - I first heard about it when I was in high school. I was never a fan of synthesizers imitating acoustic instruments and at that time samplers were low on memory and expensive. A friend of mine had heard about an eccentric inventor out in Upland (50 miles east of L.A.) who had invented these great keyboards in the 40s. Later when I was looking for sounds that would work

with some of the music I was writing I remembered Harry Chamberlin and I made a trek out to Upland and tracked him down. He was still making them out of a small warehouse near his home and I got to know Harry and bought one of his M1s. There are many records that make great use of the Chamberlin. Marvin Gaye's "Mercy, Mercy Me" Bowie/Eno "Low", Leon Russell "Carney"

Q -What's going on with Patrick? Is his absence from the last leg of the AV tour ominous?

A -Patrick is doing lots of session work and touring. His absence from the last tour was simply due to scheduling conflicts and we will be working together again in the future.

Q - Was the sound of Resigned informed more by an attempt to break from the tight production work by you and Tony Berg on the first two albums or was it ore a reflection of what you'd been listening to during the writing?

A - A bit of both. Don't forget there were five years between records 2 and 3 and I was moving away from the sample / drum loop stuff I had done on March and FFA. Everybody was doing it at that point and I wanted to do something different. Brendan was inspirational in the way he worked. He set up the sessions a bit like a concert with floor monitors and little concern for isolation when we did the basic tracks.

Q - What would be your ideal cycle for writing, recording, and releasing an album (6 months, 1 year, 1.5 years)?

A - My ideal cycle would be 6 months. If only I could get myself to cooperate.

Q - What have been the most influential songs or songwriters in the formation of your work?

A - I grew up on Dylan. That was the stuff that reached the farthest for me. Beautiful, smart, funny, moving... The Zombies Odyssey and Oracle. Beautiful songs, beautiful arrangements and the lovely voice of Colin Blunstone. Neil Young Big Star Slapp Happy/ Peter Dinklage REM: Murmur came out at a time when I had just about given up on Pop.

Q - What albums do you consider essential listening from the past decade? Can you list any current bands/performers as favorites?

A - off the top of my head, here's a few of them: Liz Phair "Exile In Guyville" Elliot Smith "X/O" and "Either/Or" Honeydogs "Here's Luck" Justin Clayton "Limb"

Q - What is your favorite guitar/amp combo for recording?

A - My 1962 Gibson Les Paul SG through an early 60s coppertop AC30

Q - What authors have influenced your songwriting? Favorite books?

A - Probably everything in some way. My faves would include Barth, Poe and

Chandler, Maugham, Fort, Twain, West, Stegner, Dickens

Q - What initiated your interest in word-play and double/triple entendres?

A - It's just a device to get more info in a 3 minute pop song.

Q - You seem to enjoy twisting phrases and words such as Resigned vs Re-signed, "a bent and broken set are we", "into the soft whites of beautiful lies". Do you also do this with the meaning of a song? Can you share a song that has multiple meanings and tell us what some of the meanings are?

A - Well, you know, you do things to keep it interesting. I get bored very easily. The things that appeal to me are sometimes admittedly quite arcane. The entire last verse of "Now We're Even" for instance has the protagonist as a passenger on the ark, but ark is never mentioned; it is just the common denominator of the rhyme scheme. I am not sure if I have written any songs that have a single meaning. Maybe. I don't know. Usually a song is about a feeling or a set of feelings connected to an experience and kind of moves through some sort of narrative either in a linear way or in a sort of hypertext fashion where one thing leads to another down little tributaries. There is always an important connection (in my mind, anyway). It's never labored over. It is just the way it comes out.

Q - Did you go to your high school prom? What was the "theme"? Was there a ruffled shirt involved? Or perhaps a robin's-egg-blue polyester tux? (Oh yeah, that was my date.)

A - I didn't go to my high school prom. But I would wear ruffled shirts to class.

Q - In future AV shows, any chance for more you do AM songs, she yours? (or shared vocals, as in No Myth)

A - I don't know, we'll see what comes up. Depending on the season we may do "Christmastime".

Q - What was the first song that you ever completed?

A - Oh God, they're never done.

Q - Do you remember what you identified yourself as first -- a musician or a lyricist -- or did the two evolve together?

A - I was first a musician and then I started writing songs.

Q - What's your favorite flavor of ice cream?

A - Mint Chip...no, wait.....yeah; Mint Chip

Q - Is there the possibility of seeing you and Christopher do "Footdown" live?

A - It's possible I suppose. That would be fun.

Q - My only question revolves around the song bunker hill. there seems to be an agreement that it was written as the la riots were taking place. being someone from Boston, i thought it might be reference to him hanging out in beantown with aimee or something and writing from that perspective. the la riots thing seems to be right, but the only lyric that i came to mind about the boston-thing was "take your coat your gonna freeze."

A - Oh, trust me. Temperature is relative. It gets cold in Los Angeles.

Q - I'd also like to repeat a previous poster's comment on your mastery of the English language and question on whether or not you were a good student. I've often wondered that myself.

A - I was a lazy student. But I read a lot.

Q - Is United Musicians strictly a label for your and Aimee's work or will it be releasing other artist's stuff too? (If so, will it be other established artists like yourself or new acts?)

A - It is a joint venture with the two of us but we have hopes that we can build it into some sort of broader collective eventually. As you know we just got Bob Mould on board.

Q - We had a discussion on the Pennlist last year about the lyrics of the song "Beautiful" and with differing interpretations. I love that song, and thought I had a handle on its meaning, and now, well, I'm just not sure. I take it pretty literally, thinking it's about the "art" of rationalizations/excuses, but everyone else thought it was about songwriting (and the lack of true art in same). Now tell us we're all wrong.

A - It is about the amount of effort, creativity and energy that can go into rationalizations. And if a rationalization works for you once, keep it around and pull it down off the shelf again when you need it. I was thinking of that as an art form. That is the bulk of it.

Q - Did you ever consider, even briefly, a career in anything other than the arts?

A - Veterinarian. eight minutes and twenty nine seconds.

Q - Do you enjoy performing live, or are you more comfortable in the studio?

A - I love working in the studio. My biggest discomfort with performing live has always been the responsibility of being an entertainer. I always love playing ... but talking...well it's public speaking. But I had a blast on the Acoustic Vaudeville tours. My fear of public speaking was the impetus for the whole concept.

Q - Wish you would play more from "Free For All" in concert ("Long Way

Down" was an awesome opener for the last Keswick show) -- is there any reason other than time constraints that you don't? It's just that I have a particular affection for this album since it that introduced me to your music way back when...memories of tooling down the Schuylkill Expressway in a little convertible with the CD blaring...but ya know it still sounds pretty darn \good today in a Taurus played at a reasonable/child-safe volume...

A - I tried to make the song selection pretty balanced between all four records but FFA did kind of get short shrift. We've done "Long Way Down", "Bunker Hill" and "By The Book". But I am thinking about working up "Strange Season" and "Now We're Even" for the future

Q - What was the most unusual thing that inspired you to write a song?

A - The L.A. river has these cats painted on outlet drains that have been there for at least 35 years. Add to that the mysterious death of a woman in Riverside and you get "Like Egypt Was"