



ALDORA BRITAIN RECORDS

The Global Independent & Underground Music E-Zine
Issue 368, Thursday 12th June 2025
“Tomorrow’s Music Today”

ABR’S TOP PICKS...

Jo Jukes and Rick Wilson,
Nicholas Boni, and Nothing
Concrete!

Live Spotlight: ALKALINE TRIO with
Lowlives at Rock City, Nottingham,
England!

Also... The Top 10 Most Influential Records
of 1979 as voted for by our featured artists!

(Pictured artist: Nothing Concrete)

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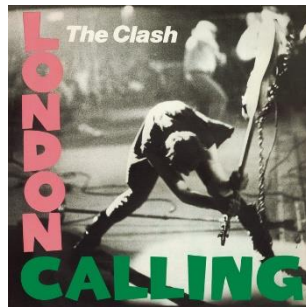
Alkaline Trio picture credit: Jonathan Weiner.

The Top 10 Most Influential Records of 1979

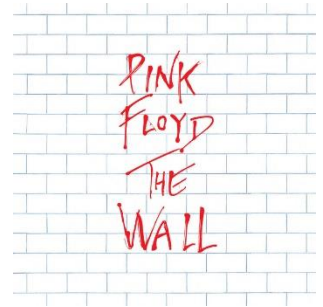
as voted for by our featured artists!

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 1979'. 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 Clash
London Calling
1979



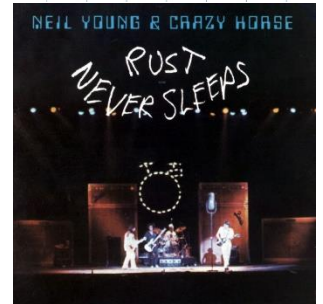
2
Pink Floyd
The Wall
1979



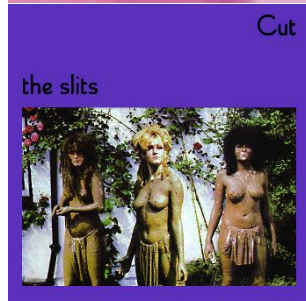
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The Cure
Three Imaginary Boys
1979



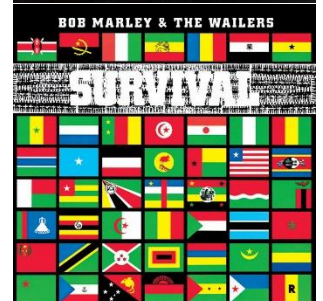
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Neil Young and Crazy Horse
Rust Never Sleeps
1979



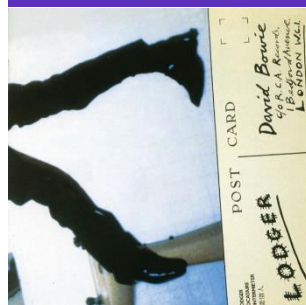
5
The Slits
Cut
1979



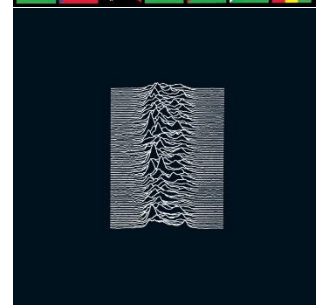
6
Bob Marley and the Wailers
Survival
1979



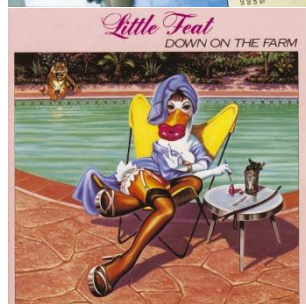
7
David Bowie
Lodger
1979



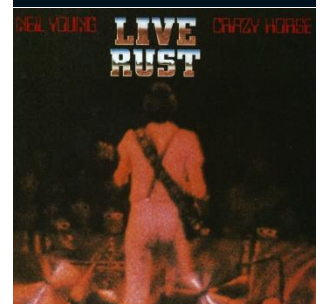
8
Joy Division
Unknown Pleasures
1979



9
Little Feat
Down on the Farm
1979



10
Neil Young and Crazy Horse
Live Rust
1979



How Many Lives Have You Touched

Jo Jukes and Rick Wilson are a creative duo who look at their art from a worldly foundation. Their output, such as 2025's *Being Human*, is an exploration and a free-roaming journey, asking questions and reflecting on past experiences. In *Being Human*'s case, Jo and Rick approach the project with the premise, 'Civilisations change but humans haven't.' This fascinating basis then travels in a myriad of differing directions, opposing yet complementing, with a rootsy, gritty, earthy texture at the album's core. The songs seek to shine light upon musical spaces that have been left in the shade, once again highlighting the duo's impressive artistic partnership. And as the buzz and excitement surrounding *Being Human* continues to gradually build, Jo and Rick sat down for a chat with *Aldora Britain Records* about their lives in story and song to date. We discussed formative creative memories from their adolescence, the beginnings and early days of their current collaboration, a selection of their recorded output so far, and much, much more. That exclusive in-depth conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

Keep up to date with Jo Jukes and Rick Wilson [HERE](#). Listen to Jo Jukes and Rick Wilson [HERE](#).

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

Aldora Britain Records: Hello Jo and Rick, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such fantastic artists from the UK. 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?

Jo Jukes: Hi Tom, I'm excited to share my inspiration and music with you. My earliest memories of music were actually in my home. My dad and grandad played piano in a pub in a syncopated style and my mum loved to sing along. I was always singing too and started to play piano at seven, then guitar at ten, and clarinet at eleven. My music teacher at secondary school, Mr Tanser, was my favourite teacher and I spent every lunch time in the music room, trying out every instrument I could get my hands on.

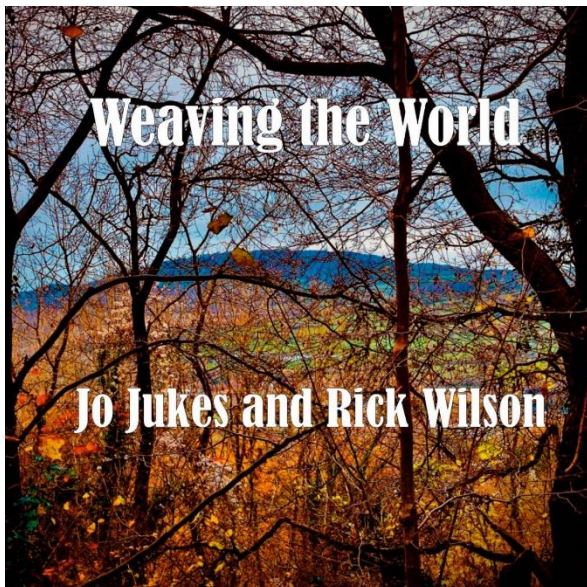


“I sat on my own musical dreams for a long time and have only just finally got around to pursuing them properly. Life, responsibilities, work, caring for others, all got in the way of me being brave enough to perform.”

The music that really influenced me early on was actually Northern soul. My brother was much older than me and used to go to Wigan Casino. He was always playing rare, imported soul singles at home and practicing his dance moves. I was only in primary school but loved the music and liked to dance along. He then got into punk and started playing very different stuff to me as I got into my teens.

I sat on my own musical dreams for a long time and have only just finally got around to pursuing them properly. Life, responsibilities, work, caring for others, all got in the way of me being brave enough to perform. Also, I didn't have people in my life around me to play with, so I pursued my creativity with a career in arts, writing, and teaching until recently when my meeting with Rick sparked our partnership.

Aldora Britain Records: And now, I would like to explore your collaborative project with the brilliant Rick Wilson. This outlet has certainly led to some superb musical moments, for sure. How did it all come to be though? How did you first meet each other and what was the initial spark that brought you together on this creative, musical level?



Jo Jukes: Being able to pursue my passion to make music now with Rick is my dream come true. Rick and I knew each other loosely through mutual friends. I found myself writing songs when I was writing my first book, *Finding Home – Journeys with the Hillforts of Shropshire*, in 2020. I was exploring the ancient landscape around me in a way to help put my roots down in a county I'm not from. Whilst visiting each Iron Age hillfort I started hearing songs in my head which I began to sing alone on my guitar around communal fire gatherings and on retreats that I was working on.

One night at the end of a lockdown period in 2020, I told a Norse story about Thor and Freya and wanted to sing 'Runesong' that I'd just written. Rick was there with his djembe and I asked if he could do something to accompany me. He could of course, and when he did, magic happened. We all felt it and he later suggested us doing more music together as he liked the other songs I was playing and felt there was an interesting space and challenge in them for him to work with. I wrote another song, 'Weaving the World', soon after and friends kept encouraging me to record it. I didn't know how to do this but I knew Rick did. The time in between had been difficult for both of us with family illnesses and caring duties so we hadn't been instantly able to pursue that first spark, but I finally emailed him in August 2022 and we started working together. We just clicked instantly and it felt like we'd always been working together.

Aldora Britain Records: I am definitely drawn in by your songwriting and songcraft and the way your styles interplay. I especially enjoyed reading about the theme of humanity throughout the recent album. How do you approach your writing process? Is it collaborative? And would you say you are often drawn to specific themes or topics?

Jo Jukes: What's happened so far is that I've written all the songs, except for 'Rise Up' on *Being Human*, which are Rick's lyrics. I tend to get songs 'downloaded' in my head, sometimes in the middle of the night, sometimes whilst I'm out walking, sometimes whilst playing my guitar. I bring them to Rick and he adds percussion, ideas,

“I knew it had to be around the nature connection theme as that was what my writing on the first two books was all about. I felt a duty to honour the land around me as a reciprocal act for the experiences I’d had whilst out walking.”

and vocals of his own. The first album *Weaving the World* was all like this. I knew it had to be around the nature connection theme as that was what my writing on the first two books was all about. I felt a duty to honour the land around me as a reciprocal act for the experiences I’d had whilst out walking.

On the second album, *The Ancestor in Me*, I was looking at my family tree, recording stories that my late mum was remembering in her final year, and thinking about the whole idea of my ancestors being moved off the land as rural working class people into the cities after the Enclosure Acts and the Industrial Revolution. Some of those songs, ‘A Lifetime of Digging’, ‘Common Land’, ‘She Moves Through Her Phases’, and ‘The Ancestor in Me’ are very personal to me. I felt like I was being channelled by the voices of my ancestors. I knew what the title and theme would be.



There was no deviation, but by then Rick and I were very relaxed with each other and created some songs together in the studio more collaboratively, such as ‘Fur and Fallow’, which was conceived on a slate marimba that Rick had constructed. Sometimes he will send me a drum loop or rhythm and I’ll write a song around that initial spark. I also have a lot of poetry and nature writing on my WordPress site so often look to that to see if it fits into a melody that I get. Sometimes it slots in perfectly, like on ‘I Can Invisible Myself’, and you know it’s just the right fit.

With the third album again, *Being Human*, I had a clear idea about it covering the states and stages of human experience. Aging, death, love, loss, pain, heartache, joy, sorrow. A lot of those things were playing out in our lives and all my writing stems from personal experience in some way. I tend to work fast and productively in my creative life and I already know what the next album will be called and have ideas that I’m itching to get on with.

I’m also really excited about how our work will evolve now that we have more time to collaborate freely. Rick has worked with storytellers, theatre productions, poets, as well as his long solo projects and past band experiences. We have very different styles. Rick writes lyrics and fits them to music. I tend to be the other way around or I get the whole thing in one go, usually the melody or by playing a rhythm first. Bringing our styles together opens up all kinds of new possibilities. I also like the idea of putting musical background soundscapes to more of my poetry. This is something Rick has vast experience of throughout his long musical career. For me, I’m like a kid in a sweetshop, playing around in the studio takes me back to school days when everything was possible and I had dreams of making music. Now that I’m actually doing it, it’s fantastic.

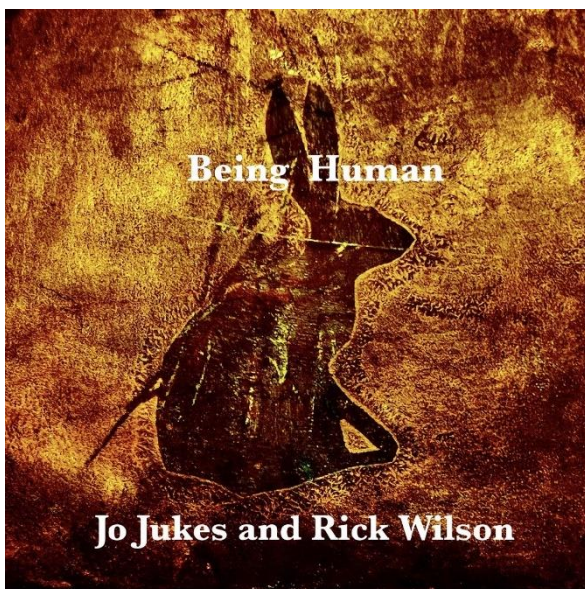
Aldora Britain Records: Let’s get more specific with this question now. I would like to focus on ‘Awenydd’ and ‘Rain’. For each, what is the story behind the song, and can you remember the moment it came to be? Did anything in particular inspire them and what do they mean to you as the writer and performer of each?

Jo Jukes: I can remember exactly what inspired them and how they came into being, and yes, they both mean something very personal to me as the writer and performer. A few years back I was training to be an ‘awenyth’, a keeper of the old ways on a shamanic apprenticeship. I like the way that nature became my teacher during this process and how it made me reflect on my life and compost the experiences and people that had limiting

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effects on my life path. It was an empowering process and I felt I’d learned to be braver at being myself and striving to fulfil my own dreams rather than those projected onto me by societal pressures to conform. It was a song for myself in many ways but also for other woman, and indeed anyone that has been told not to hope to fulfil their dreams.

‘Rain’ was written quite quickly on a rainy day in the studio listening to the rain on the roof. It was a direct reflection on my feelings at the time. I think it reveals something of longing for change and new beginnings in its melody and phrasing. We tried it out with me playing cello, balafon, and keyboards but went back to using a handpan as the tune had arisen from a sample Rick had made on a friend Nic’s gorgeous Zephyr handpan. We borrowed it to record the piece, then borrowed it back a week before our album launch gig, planning to play it together standing up. Fortunately, it all worked beautifully but we still don’t have one of our own so I can’t write any more songs on one yet!



Aldora Britain Records: Both of these tracks feature on the spellbinding *Being Human* album. This record also acted as my introduction to your work, so thank you so much for the music! What are your memories from writing, recording and releasing this collection, and how would you say you grew and evolved as artists throughout this process?

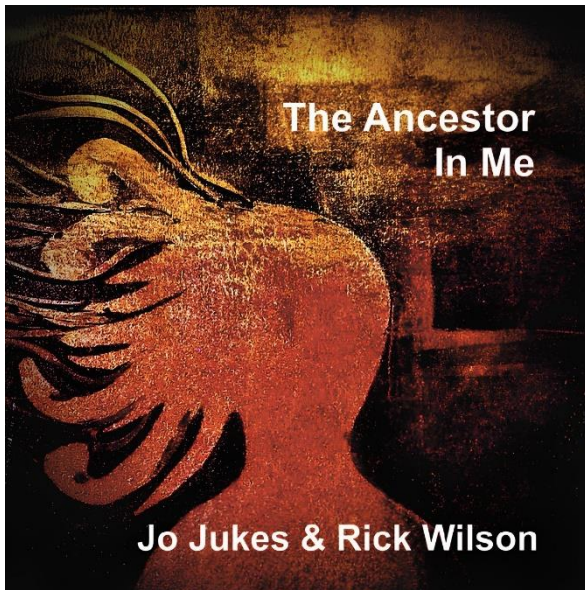
Jo Jukes: I think of all the albums this is the one I feel most proud of, in the sense that I am beginning to allow myself to see myself as a musician and singer-songwriter. The three years of making music together and making three albums has changed lots of things in my life and in the process of this last one I feel I have more understanding of what my voice can do. I felt braver to sing differently and to play more freely. Having Rick’s support and encouragement along the way has been

fantastic, but this last album is also much more of a true collaboration as it reflects the growing partnership between us. Rick is in charge of all the recording and mixing but I am also much more a part of the decision making process too. Also, with asking our friend Niall to come along on saxophone. I can hear what I want to be in the spaces and know how I want the songs to sound. It’s been really exciting for me to keep learning throughout and I can see lots of growth.

Rick Wilson: The other thing to add here is that the album was actually made in the most difficult of circumstances, so it’s a bit of a miracle that it got made at all, or any of them for that matter. I think the way that Jo and I coped with the events in our lives at the time was through our musical creativity as it took us away from the stresses of what we were going through. For me it was watching my wife’s rapid deterioration with Alzheimer’s and eventual move into a care home, for Jo it was the death of her mother, duties as a longtime carer, and also the breakdown of her marriage. Music, creative practice, each other, and good friends to lean on have been essential throughout the development of this album, hence the title *Being Human*.

Aldora Britain Records: Previously, if we travel back a year, you embarked on another extraordinary project, *The Ancestor in Me*. I have been enjoying getting to know this album over on Bandcamp. 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?

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Jo Jukes: I got obsessed with the Hungarian zither on this album so it was a kind of exercise in how many ways I could find to play it, hitting, strumming, plucking, bowing, sliding, etcetera. On one track, ‘She Moves Through Her Phases’, I played a lyre. I love the song but the lyre proved very unstable in tuning so it has become difficult to perform live. I think this album pushed us to the limits of what we could produce just as a duo without the backing of a fuller band, but there is something of a risk in this approach that I also like. I wanted to be brave and try new things and I’m proud that we did that.

Of course, you always listen and think some songs could be better. I can hear my voice very critically or the limits of my basic guitar playing, but again I like the variety of trying lots of different sounds and there are a lot of distressed instruments

in Rick’s studio that we like to experiment on. Visually when we perform it’s exciting for the audience as we shift between drums, slates, stringed instrument, gongs, clap sticks, shells, sickles, etcetera. There is something that really appeals to me in this approach.

Rick Wilson: We all use the verb ‘to play’ in all genres when we make music, and we certainly do ‘play’. Interestingly the Spanish, are exceptions to this, in that they use the verb tocar, ‘to touch’, as the verb to describe making music, but this clearly doesn’t diminish playful qualities they create.

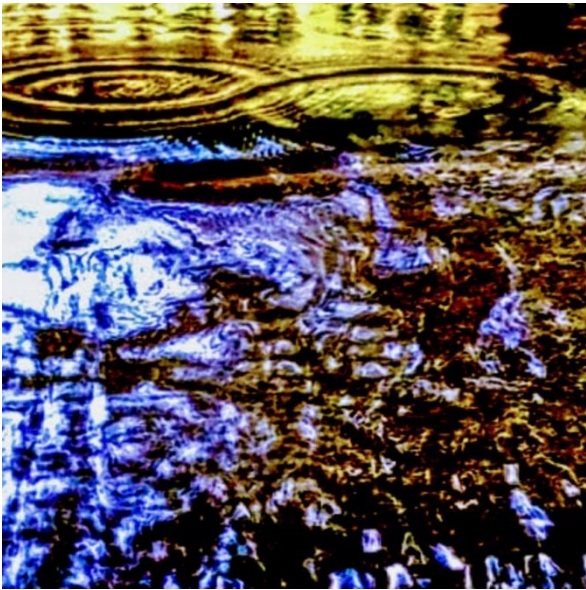
Aldora Britain Records: As you well know by now, I love the Jukes-Wilson crossover and your approach to making and creating music. That old time, old world folk feel with a progressive undercurrent. How would you say this style of yours came about, what goes into it for you, and who are some of your biggest influences and inspirations as artists currently?

Jo Jukes: One of our biggest challenges has been what to call our music, so I really like your description here. We don’t seem to fit as folk with the folk brigade but because we’re largely acoustic and lyrical we get plonked there. We actually like a huge variety of music. Punk, world, jazz, hip hop, folk, funk. I don’t really know what our style is but my inspiration doesn’t come from other artists as such as from direct experiences. I love a lot of different artists but I can’t try to be like anyone else, only myself, so I never think, ‘I want to write a song like that.’ It would be impossible.

Rick Wilson: We have found it nearly impossible to describe ourselves within a genre, a label that’s so often required on musical platforms. It also inhibits us getting live work. We need a quiet audience so that draws us more towards spoken word, folk, and storytelling type audiences. We are unusual as a combination of singer and instrumentalist plus percussionist and singer, with occasional saxophones added but that should mark us out in a positive way in our eyes. Our music comes about largely through curiosity and experimentation to find the right frame and sound for a song. I have so many artists of all sorts who have left their mark on me in my lifetime but none that I could honestly say that ‘influence’ me.

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?

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Rick Wilson: Since COVID, fewer people have been attending small and middle sized live venues, the traditional breeding ground for opportunity and development for artists, and this has caused widespread closures of such venues. Hence fewer gigs but for an ever-expanding number of musical hopefuls. There has been a shift onto social media based platforms, some like *Tiny Desk* are very good, but a secondary substitute, nevertheless. I hope that AI can be kept in its place by human vigilance. It doesn't have the power, at least not yet, to instigate original artistic ideas. Let's hang on to that.

Politically, I wish there were more and louder voices of opposition coming through music but perhaps I just don't hear them. Or perhaps there is a fear of putting one's head above the parapet. The music industry has been my *bête noir* all my

thinking life. I feel somehow blessed that I've been a musical survivor for so many years, in spite of it, without the need to have a day job or musically 'selling out'. The music biz hires and fires according to changing tastes and whims and the spreadsheets of its accountants. I learned this from old hands many years ago. The post punk DIY time challenged that and, later, cheaper home recording and the good side of social media have created alternative ways. This has, of course, led to a flooding of music in the world, much of which could do with secondary consideration but I do welcome the greater 'democratisation' of music. Sometimes, it's just a question of being in the right place at the right time. All in all, I feel lucky that, whilst not widely known as an artist, I have been able to chart my own course.

Jo Jukes: I would echo all that Rick has said but also add that as someone relatively new to the music industry, I can only go with the situation I find myself in at present. It's difficult to put yourself out there without embracing social media platforms and streaming. In some ways throughout lockdown these became a life saver for people too, so there is much to be gained through being able to contact and reach people in this way, but I struggle to keep it up as I'm not yet used to being 'on show'.

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist or band? **Jo:** Nick Cave, I've been a fan for thirty-eight years. **Rick:** Magma, for longer than that!

AB Records: Favourite album? **Jo:** Ooh very tricky, but I'd go with *Grinderman*. **Rick:** If you twisted my arm, I might say *Hejira* by Joni Mitchell.

AB Records: First album you bought with your own money? **Jo:** Blondie, *Plastic Letters*, 1978. **Rick:** Spirit, *The Family That Plays Together*, 1969.

AB Records: Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Jo:** *Tago Mago* by Can. It still sounds so fresh and out there. **Rick:** Gil Scott-Heron, *Storm Music*.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **Jo:** My brother was into early punk and took me to see Boomtown Rats at Sheffield City Hall in 1977, 'Lookin' After No. 1' was my first twelve-inch single. **Rick:** Jimi Hendrix, September 1967, Royal Festival Hall, London.

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AB Records: Loudest gig as an audience member? **Jo:** Swans at a gig in Leeds in the 1980s, it was so loud it made me feel sick. **Rick:** Led Zeppelin at the Toby Jug pub, Tolworth, Surrey, 1969.

AB Records: Style icon? **Jo:** I don’t really have a style icon. I guess I like the opposite of style and have always been a fan of charity shops. I like people who look good with authentic ease without looking like they’re trying too hard, so Patti Smith has always been someone I’ve admired. I saw her perform with Nick Cave in Dublin in 2018 and wished Nick still looked more dishevelled like in his punk days than in his expensive tailored suits and loafers. **Rick:** I’ve never had one in particular but I have a collection of vibrant shirts which, I think, came from an interest in Kandinsky paintings and op art. After I shed my long hair, many years ago, I feel I’ve created my own individual look incorporating all sorts of mixes and matches, and un-matches.

AB Records: Favourite film? **Jo:** *The Dig*. I’m a bit of an archaeology addict, or *The Nettle Dress*, which was just such a beautiful film in every way. **Rick:** *Five Easy Pieces* with Jack Nicholson.

AB Records: Favourite TV show? **Jo:** It was always an old American series called *Northern Exposure*, but I am very partial to *The Detectorists*, don’t get me started on my stone tool finds, or *Gone Fishing*. I love Bob Mortimer. **Rick:** *The Prisoner*.

AB Records: Favourite up and coming artist or band? **Jo:** I really liked The Comet is Coming and Sons of Kemet but they are no longer up and coming ‘together’, so maybe it’s now King Shabaka, not exactly new. I also like Lankum, English Teacher, and Tristwch Y Fenywod. **Rick:** All the ones that I’ve been following have already ‘upped’ and ‘come’!



The Benefit of the Doubt

'I'm an emo kid at heart,' proclaims Brooklyn based singer-songwriter **Nicholas Boni**, before listing an impressive array of influences that runs the gamut from Modest Mouse and Weezer to Manchester Orchestra and Neutral Milk Hotel. These formative leanings have since grown into an incendiary take on DIY garage rock and roll with a down-to-earth jangly alternative undercurrent consistently coming to the fore. 2025's *lost&found&lostagain* captures this exquisitely, a straight-to-the-core collection of songs from Nicholas, tapping into lived experiences and worldly observations. It is indeed an outing that young emo Nicholas Boni would have been unquestionably proud of. And taking a recent break from these exceptional musings, Nicholas sat down for a chat with *Aldora Britain Records* about his musical journey so far. We discussed popular original compositions from his back-catalogue, his growth and evolution as a musician and songwriter over time, 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 Nicholas Boni [HERE](#). Listen to Nicholas Boni [HERE](#).

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Aldora Britain Records: Hello Nicholas, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic artist from over in Brooklyn. It is amazing how music can bring us together from all around the world. 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?

Nicholas Boni: Hey Tom! Thanks so much for setting this up! My grandmother played the piano and her brother could play just about any instrument, mostly guitar and trumpet. I wasn't any kind of musical prodigy as a kid, but I was close with them, and after they both passed when I was fifteen or sixteen, learning those instruments helped me feel connected to

them. Beyond that, I remember my mom having a Queen tape in her car that we listened to constantly, and to this day I'm completely enamoured with their lead guitar sound.

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 impressive songwriting and songcraft. How do you approach this part of your 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?

Nicholas Boni: I would say my lyrics are confessional in a way that is not bound by plain truthfulness. A lot of my songwriting is the product of me trying to wrangle with difficult emotions or periods of my life, but when writing a song about it, I often try to examine one facet of the emotional experience, or maybe a worst tendency of mine, and explore it, stretch it out, blow it out of proportion, etcetera, so that by the time the song is finished the 'I' feels like a character to me. As for structure, I often feel like I have no idea what I'm doing.

Aldora Britain Records: May 2025 saw you release a stellar new album, *lost&found&lostagain*. This was also my introduction to your music, so it already holds a special place in my record collection. What are your

“Over time I'd meticulously mapped out each part of the instrumentation in my head ... I have a notepad from the recording period which looks like the convoluted ramblings of a crazy person.”

memories from writing, recording and releasing it, and how would you say you grew and evolved as an artist throughout this process?

Nicholas Boni: I really appreciate you listening. Most of those songs were kicking around in my head for, like, four to ten years before recording. Over time I'd meticulously mapped out each part of the instrumentation in my head, so the recording process was mostly about executing on a predetermined vision, basically just playing the parts right and not messing up. I have a notepad from the recording period which looks like the convoluted ramblings of a crazy person. I think I've learned that my head is the worst place to keep things. I grew a ton as a bassist, vocalist, and audio engineer, and I'd be able to tackle another project like this much easier and faster today. Stay tuned! I'm so much better at playing my own music today, and so much more comfortable sharing it with others, both in recordings and in playing live.



Aldora Britain Records: I would like to pick out two personal favourites now. These are ‘Looking for Your Name in the Sun’ and ‘Make Believe’. 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?

Nicholas Boni: ‘Looking for Your Name in the Sun’ was written in one sitting after a particularly painful conversation about something that was completely my fault. I think the main object of writing it was to hit the guitar really hard, a common theme in my songwriting. I guess I was sick of feeling alienated from people I loved after I'd actively pushed them away, so I wanted to rip that part of myself wide open. It helped. This song took on a totally different identity when

rehearsing for the album release show as an electric rocker, which was such a fun and cathartic evolution that the song seems to have undergone of its own will.

‘Make Believe’ was all about having a crush on the wrong person, and instead of just acknowledging reality and moving on, spending my time imagining how much better things could have been if only everything was completely different. I've played this one live a few times with backup vocals from my friends Bee and Nicole, and it's been a ton of fun.

Aldora Britain Records: I have been doing some digging over on Bandcamp and this had led me to a superb record of yours from 2016, the *Someone Left the Light On* EP. 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?

Nicholas Boni: Wow, throwback! I recorded *Someone Left the Light On* with my band in college, Monsters in the Attic. We tracked the whole thing live, with very few overdubs, in one afternoon. We made some poor decisions, like not tuning between songs and adjusting our volume knobs in the middle of takes. But we had no idea what we were doing other than making music, so what stands out the most to me is how much fun we had, and I still think the songs rock. I learned a ton from that project, but I wouldn't change a thing. It's important to lay down milestones and then move on from them.

“What stands out the most to me is how much fun we had, and I still think the songs rock. I learned a ton from that project, but I wouldn't change a thing. It's important to lay down milestones and then move on from them.”

Aldora Britain Records: Brooklyn is always a scene that I have admired from afar. That part of the world has such a rich musical heritage. What is it like there today? A firsthand account! How would you say it has changed over time? What are some of the obstacles and challenges you have faced as an independent musician?

Nicholas Boni: Don't let anyone tell you that New York is dead. There are very cool venues and DIY spots around the city where you can see supremely talented musicians and expressions of pure pathos. You can also see any major act you want, I guess, but the ticket prices are outrageous. It is true that the city is ever increasing in cost, and many venues died during COVID, and people who would otherwise keep a venue afloat by spending money there can't afford \$2000 plus for rent and also an \$8 beer plus tip and maybe also lost their job. At times it feels ruthless and economically impossible.

There are so many talented people here that it's easy to feel washed out and overwhelmed when trying to cut through. But I believe more in community than I do in competing with other artists. So the way to go is just to talk to artists you like, make friends, show up at their shows, and wander around looking for flyers and new venues. Good things happen when you're out, open-minded, and open-hearted.



Aldora Britain Records: As you well know by now, I love that Boni sound and your approach to making and creating music. That sun-soaked, technicolour, psychedelic 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?

Nicholas Boni: I'm an emo kid at heart. As a teenager I spent countless hours playing the guitar to albums by Say Anything, Modest Mouse, Weezer, Neutral Milk Hotel, Manchester Orchestra, etcetera. I definitely learned my tone and technique sensibilities from them. But I also think that a similar emotional register can be found in artists like The Temptations, Ray Charles, Macy Gray, and Sheryl Crow. I don't think I sound like them, but they contain a poignant weight that

is important to me in musical expression. In a more literal sense, I like putting my Stratocaster in the middle pickup position and thrashing jazzy chords through distortion pedals. I think melodies are more important than technical flair, but emotion trumps both.

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?

Nicholas Boni: Well, as a formal entity, the music industry is, like any capitalistic industry, a rapacious machine that seeks to chew up artists, swallow their pulp, and spit out their bones. The use of AI to replace artists today is only its newest expression, whereas before it had to go through the work of shafting them with bad contracts. Luckily, music is a base component of humanity and will outlive any extractive tactic. It's my

“So the way to go is just to talk to artists you like, make friends, show up at their shows, and wander around looking for flyers and new venues. Good things happen when you're out, open-minded, and open-hearted.”

hope that as AI slop pollutes the digital realm, we'll come to focus more on the physical world again, as the only thing we can trust as genuine. It wasn't that long ago that music could only be heard in the same room as a musician.

The past few years have taught me that, in order to be politically effective, I have to avoid thinking at this scale, because thinking at scale of the genocide in Gaza leaves me trembling impotently with rage. Rather, I have learned to think more about what I can accomplish today to make the world around me better. The album release show for *lost&found&lostagain* raised over \$1,000 for the Crown Heights Mutual Aid group, which provides direct assistance to people in my neighbourhood who struggle with food security, bills, the cost of housing and childcare, etcetera. To make this happen, I had to write some emails, send about eighty texts, make a flyer, and cajole the crowd from the stage. These are individual scale actions with tangible positive results.

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist or band? **Nicholas:** Say Anything, Modest Mouse, Jim Croce, The Temptations, The Cardigans, Tennis, Chopin.

AB Records: Favourite album? **Nicholas:** ...*Is a Real Boy* by Say Anything. **AB Records:** First album you bought with your own money? **Nicholas:** *Ben Folds Five*. **AB Records:** Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Nicholas:** *Pollen* by Tennis.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **Nicholas:** My mom and I saw the Backstreet Boys when I was about five! Haha! **AB Records:** Loudest gig as an audience member? **Nicholas:** Explosions in the Sky at Sound on Sound Fest in 2016. The bass shook my skeleton.

AB Records: Style icon? **Nicholas:** Walt 'Clyde' Frazier. **AB Records:** Favourite film? **Nicholas:** *Princess Mononoke*. **AB Records:** Favourite TV show? **Nicholas:** *Jeopardy!*

AB Records: Favourite up and coming artist or band? **Nicholas:** Right now it's Sex Week! Go listen to 'Naked'!



Empty Whisky Bottle Mariachi Blues

Funky swing, Afrobeat, cumbia, folk, blues. This is just a handful of stylistic approaches that Fergus McKay contemplated for **Nothing Concrete**'s recent long player, *The Imperfectionist*. The album itself is centred around storytelling through a worldly lens, observing and commenting on the ills of humanity, but also life's joys, the human condition and all its facets. This quirky and forward-thinking approach is captured exceptionally by an all-star Nothing Concrete band, a collective of players that have a brilliantly tightknit musical camaraderie, allowing for sets like *The Imperfectionist* to truly take on their own character and life. The album is one of revelation, revealing more layers with each passing listen. And as the buzz and excitement surrounding the record continues to gradually grow, Fergus sat down for a chat with *Aldora Britain Records* about his Nothing Concrete journey to date. We discussed the lasting impact of the COVID era, formative musical memories from his youth, the beginnings and early days of Nothing Concrete, and much, much more. That exclusive in-depth conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

Keep up to date with Nothing Concrete [HERE](#). Listen to Nothing Concrete [HERE](#).

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



Aldora Britain Records: Hello Fergus, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic artist from over in France. It is amazing how music can bring us together from all around the world. Let's start off by travelling back in time, and let's go 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? It has certainly led to some superb artistic output since!

Fergus McKay: First of all, thanks! We're thrilled to be chatting with you about the album! I have a ton of childhood memories of sitting in the back of my dad's car listening to his cassettes. He loved Buddy Holly, Simon and Garfunkel, The Stones, Cat Stevens, stuff I'm still listening to now. I don't

think he knew really what it was doing to my young brain. I became an avid record collector, as soon as I had any spending money it went on tapes and records.

I was keen on learning the guitar, though not very successful at first. And my brother, cousins, and I would write songs and record them onto tapes when I was about five or six. We'd multitrack by playing the first thing we recorded on one cassette player while we sung over it and recorded the whole lot onto the second tape player. The quality must have been abysmal by the third or fourth tracking! I still remember a couple of them. It wasn't until I was about fifteen though that I went busking, armed with three Bob Dylan tunes, which I played end to end for an hour or so. I had a very successful hour earning around £20, which was a lot of money back then, and never looked back!

Aldora Britain Records: And now, let's take a leap forward to the present day and a brilliant band of yours out of Toulouse. The beginnings of Nothing Concrete must have been an 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 a creative, musical level?

“We went off on a busking tour of Europe in my LDV convoy van that summer and I just kept at it, even when the others eventually drifted back to their Edinburgh lives.”

Fergus McKay: The first iteration of Nothing Concrete was formed in a Scottish pub at an open mic night. We had no name for the band so when the guy hosting the evening asked if we had a name, I replied, ‘Er, Nothing Concrete,’ and it stuck! We went off on a busking tour of Europe in my LDV convoy van that summer and I just kept at it, even when the others eventually drifted back to their Edinburgh lives. I met Gaia, who plays double bass in the band, on the road and we’ve been together ever since. We’ve worked with around fifty musicians under the name Nothing Concrete since then. I was also a fully-fledged one-man band for quite some time during that period, busking around Europe with a drumkit on my back, until we settled here in the Pyrenees. It’s really rural here so busking became less of a viable option, so we started to really build the band as our main project when we arrived here. The lineup is pretty much fixed now and all of the other members live around here, even though they’re from different parts of the world originally.

Aldora Britain Records: When I listen to the band, I am definitely drawn in by your dynamic songwriting 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?

Fergus McKay: Thanks very much! I think of myself as a songwriter first and foremost, then singer, instrumentalist, and performer after that. I’ve been writing all my life and have had to find countless strategies to evade writer’s block, or at least not be scared of it, and to avoid repeating myself. I think being such an avid collector of music and being curious about different styles of world music, exploring how different genres have collided, particularly during the twentieth century, to create new forms of music is infinitely inspirational. I tend to write in seclusion and then present the song, often with the skeleton of an arrangement, which we then collaborate on as a band to polish and develop for performance.



Credit Damian Galli

“The themes I'm drawn to are often political. I like to look at the absurdity of life. There's a bit of self-derision running through songs ... I try to look at new, for me, ways of writing and telling stories.”

The themes I'm drawn to are often political. I like to look at the absurdity of life. There's a bit of self-derision running through songs like ‘He Don't Do Much of That Now’ and ‘The Imperfectionist’, whereas ‘Cometh the Hour’ or ‘The Boats’ are really commentaries on the political state we're in. I try to look at new, for me, ways of writing and telling stories.

Aldora Britain Records: You are fresh from releasing a hard-hitting record called *The Imperfectionist*. 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 and recording this collection, and how would you say you grew and evolved as a band throughout this process?

Fergus McKay: I wrote most of the ten songs a couple of years ago and they currently make up around half of our live set, so we've played them a fair bit now. They've definitely grown up and taken on a life of their own. The process working with Keith, who co-produced it, was really fantastic, to have such a musical brain to help us really polish them and finetune the arrangements and performances! I'd say the current lineup really solidified and moved into a new gear through the process, we've been lucky to have some great partners supporting us through the process, so we've been able to have pretty good working conditions. It's an exciting moment for us and we're hoping the album is going to help push us to new heights!

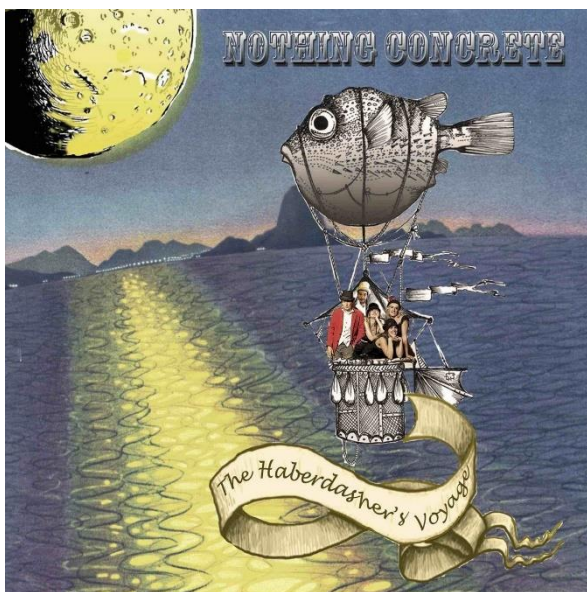
Aldora Britain Records: I would like to pick out two personal favourites from the album. These are ‘Broken Bird’ and ‘Empty Whisky Bottle Mariachi Blues’. For each, what is the story behind the song, and can you remember the moment it came to be? Did anything in particular inspire them and what do they mean to you as the writer and performer of each?



“Having said that I'm okay with imperfection, I think it can add to the enjoyment of music, or any art, especially in this era of everything being computerised and all too often having the human element suppressed.”

Fergus McKay: I'm glad you like those two. They're definitely the more melodic side of what we do and both have quite a South American tinge to them! 'Broken Bird' was one of those songs that arrives almost fully formed. I was driving down through Spain to see an old busking buddy of mine who lives near Malaga, and just started humming a tune, which had a sort of cumbia feel. That became the saxophone motif which the song is based around, then the words arrived, it was like a gift, it's so rare that that happens, but it's amazing when it does!

'Empty Whisky Bottle Mariachi Blues' was the result of my youngest son becoming temporarily obsessed with Marty Robbins' *Gunfighter Ballads*, which is such an amazing record, full of brilliantly written story songs about cowboys! Closing track 'The Western' was also influenced by that album. It's beautifully old-fashioned but timeless and here's a lot of mariachi-esque arrangements on there and I was trying to capture something of the same spirit.



Aldora Britain Records: Previously, if we travel back to 2021, you unveiled another impeccable LP in the form of *The Haberdasher's Voyage*. This album is also making a strong impression on me. 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?

Fergus McKay: Back in 2021 we had zero budget to record so it's even more homespun than *The Imperfectionist*! I produced it pretty much in a shed, and there's some messiness to the playing in a few spots that I'd have loved to have had the resources to rework. Having said that I'm okay with imperfection, I think it can add to the enjoyment of music, or any art, especially in this era of everything being computerised and all too often having the human element suppressed. The

thing about trying to evolve and improve is that when you look back at what you did before, with the knowledge that you learned from doing it, it's not as good as it would be if you did it now, but if you did it now, you wouldn't have done it then and you wouldn't have gained the experience that makes you who you are now, if that makes any sense at all?

Aldora Britain Records: As you well know by now, I love the Nothing Concrete sound and your approach to making and creating music. That worldly music cocktail. 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?

Fergus McKay: I think my years as a street musician, travelling all over Europe and playing music with people from just about every country on Earth, combined with avidly collecting records all of my life, has combined to be quite a good musical education! I love putting a few different ingredients in the pot and seeing what comes of it. In terms of what is influencing me right now, I've been listening to diverse stuff including, but not limited to, The Heliocentrics, Tinariwen, Menahan Street Band, Piers Faccini, Alice Merton, Amalia Rodrigues, Boban Marković, Chuck E. Weiss, Renato Caruso. I think it'll all rub off in some way or another!

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

“I think my years as a street musician, travelling all over Europe and playing music with people from just about every country on Earth, combined with avidly collecting records all of my life, has combined to be quite a good musical education!”

within the music industry too, Al 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?

Fergus McKay: Hah, the biggest question last! All the stuff you mentioned is playing on my mind constantly. I find that all of the things you mention are rarely far from the forefront of my mind and this naturally influences my lyric writing. The challenge is to express myself without being preachy, or too opinionated, trying to find ways to engage the listener with humour, satire, positivity, turn these subjects into stories that people can relate to. We're definitely living in times that are rich in source material, but that doesn't necessarily make the job easier! We're all dealing with a lot of stress, worry, uncertainty, and as a father of two boys who will be coming of age in the next decade, it's petrifying! That's a huge motivating factor in trying to do the right thing and staying optimistic!

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist or band? **Fergus:** Van Morrison.

AB Records: Favourite album? **Fergus:** *Moondance*. **AB Records:** First album you bought with your own money? **Fergus:** Adam and the Ants, *Prince Charming*. **AB Records:** Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Fergus:** *LCD Soundsystem*.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **Fergus:** Bob Dylan at Wembley Arena. **AB Records:** Loudest gig as an audience member? **Fergus:** Faith No More, sometime in the 90s.

AB Records: Style icon? **Fergus:** Worzel Gummidge, the original. **AB Records:** Favourite film? **Fergus:** *Trading Places*. **AB Records:** Favourite TV show? **Fergus:** *Only Fools and Horses*.

AB Records: Favourite up and coming artist or band? **Fergus:** Old Salt.

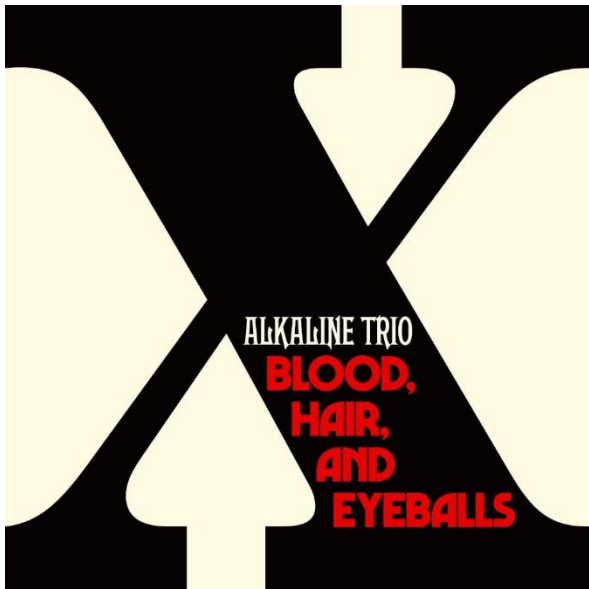


Blood, Hair, and Eyeballs

Alkaline Trio with Lowlives at Rock City, Nottingham, Tuesday 23rd July 2024

(Featured photography by Jonathan Weiner)

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Pop punk royalty and iconoclasts **Alkaline Trio** brought their *Blood, Hair, and Eyeballs* tour to the UK's most aptly named venue this July. Arriving at Rock City in the surroundings of Nottingham, this renowned American alternative powerhouse gave fans a whistlestop tour of their catalogue, incorporating their 90s beginnings, the emo boom, pop punk heights, and so much more. Throughout their set, Alkaline Trio crucially see past the limitations of these sonic playgrounds. This isn't a high school dropout party, this is a set that swings from connective emotion and soulful outpourings to straight-up rock and roll. Andriano and his bandmates Matt Skiba and Atom Willard certainly make a night to remember.

Prior to the headline set, Nottingham's alternative underbelly was treated to Los Angeles grunge newcomers **Lowlives**, featuring frontman Lee Downer cutting a Kurt Cobain like figure. This four-piece became fully engaged from the off, embracing Rock City as if they were playing to a loyal following somewhere along their sun-soaked coastal homebase. Amidst bassist Steve Lucarelli's brilliantly and wildly possessed headbanging windmill motion, and the band's juggernaut presence, spearheaded by the power of drummer Luke Johnson, there was time for a well-received singalong moment in 'I Don't Like You and Your Friends', dedicated by Downer to those 'c**t friends' we all have. Picking up on and feeding off English Lowlives fans in the audience, and having won over Alkaline Trio's devoted family of music lovers, the group gloriously stormed through highlights including their unforgettable new single 'Loser', a standout track from their current album *Freaking Out*, and then allowed time for Lucarelli to engage in some metallic vocal tones with a front-row member of the audience. A brash, abrasive and beautiful confrontation from the mighty Lowlives.

Following a short intermission, lights were dimmed and the headline act arrived on stage, Skiba comedically staggering zombie-like to his microphone, guitar firmly in hand. This entrance immediately tapped into the trio's sense of fun, not taking themselves too seriously, joking and finding the joy and relatability in their music, perhaps also even a nod to their gorily titled new album *Blood, Hair, and Eyeballs*. This very record's opening track, 'Hot for Preacher', provided the set's lead-off moment too, a one-two punch of pop punk glory with the band's added trademark of thought-provoking and searching lyrics ('We are so far, so lost, it's true, we can't attempt to start anew. We lost our way so long ago, chopping things down before they grow.') This crunching and driving song provided a quintessential Alkaline Trio opener, also allowing Skiba the space and familiarity to triumphantly return from the superstardom of his stint with worldwide icons Blink-182. 'Hot for Preacher' could not have set the stage any more perfectly.

During the opening salvos of the band's adrenaline-fuelled, energy-loaded and sweat-drenched offerings, the beautiful-to-witness and complementing interplay between Skiba and Andriano truly shined, vocals working

“We are so far, so lost, it’s true, we can’t attempt to start anew. We lost our way so long ago, chopping things down before they grow.”

together, instrumentation and melodies providing a superb wall of sound, and their unique and lasting friendship shining through in the banter between songs. Indeed, the pair revealed that for their ‘fifth or so’ visit to Rock City they had made a backstage pact for something ‘extra special’, also accurately proclaiming that they were more than living up to these expectations. This was testified to during moments such as golden oldie ‘We’ve Had Enough’, newbie single ‘Bad Time’, and the catchy handclap rhythm of ‘Calling All Skeletons’. These songs with a memorable pop leaning were exceptionally juxtaposed with blitzkrieg, fast-paced punk moments such as ‘Take Lots with Alcohol’, the high watermark of ‘Mr Chainsaw’, and ‘Armageddon’, dedicated to Skiba’s son Snowdon, if he were to have a son. Each of these propulsive surges allowed Willard to take the spotlight with ear-bursting intent and drive, the latter tune also aptly introduced the ‘barnstorming’ section of the set.

Another highlight came in the form of Dan Andriano’s onstage presence, taking the lead on *Blood, Hair, and Eyeballs* track ‘Versions of You’, as well as the set’s obligatory ‘love song for you’, the unforgettable ‘One Hundred Stories’. The scuzzed-up Frankenstein resurrection of ‘Break’ recommitted the band to their alternative rock and roll roots, ‘Mercy Me’ transposed a willing audience back to the height of pop punk and emo revelry, announced as a song for ‘the singers out there’, and ‘Sadie’ was an invitation to reap chaos after a recent Skiba literary discovery. The main set’s final four was an outstanding statement to finish on, a quickfire and relentless barrage of ‘Blood, Hair, and Eyeballs’, ‘Stupid Kid’, ‘Private Eye’, and ‘Time to Waste’, each unleashing electrifying new energy into the crowd, like a bolt of lightning travelling into a mosh-pitting, crowd-surfing cauldron of pure anthemia. The band then returned to the stage for ‘Radio’, a selection that perfectly encapsulated Alkaline Trio’s skill as a unit, as they combined their punk foundations with pure emotive outpouring. This ending was nothing short of perfect, contrasting the most direct and punchy moments of the evening with the everlasting soul of timeless music, a tears-in-your-eyes moment.



“I used to long for broken bones, I used to long for a casket to call my own. I never had a problem facing fear, but I’m done, over and out my dear, and oh mercy me, God bless catastrophe.”

This career spanning set of hard hits and honest elation captured what Alkaline Trio remain to be as a band of brothers, even after all this time. Matt Skiba standing tall with bleached and pointed hair, Dan Andriano moustachioed and embracing his dad rock era, Atom Willard looking like everyone’s favourite high school dropout. With nowhere to hide in their three-piece wheelhouse, they each command their instrument with an integrity and humble nature, in turn bringing out the very best in each other and their audience too. It can be intentionally dorky and witty and joyous, it can be heart-rending and nostalgic and emotive, but it is always a punk punch in a time when it is needed most. And that is what Alkaline Trio should be thanked for and celebrated for, and in Nottingham after the *Blood, Hair, and Eyeballs* tour rolled through town, that is what they are remembered for.

Setlist

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) Hot for Preacher | 11) Armageddon |
| 2) We’ve Had Enough | 12) Sadie |
| 3) Take Lots with Alcohol | 13) Mercy Me |
| 4) Bad Time | 14) Warbrain |
| 5) Versions of You | 15) Crawl |
| 6) Mr Chainsaw | 16) Blood, Hair, and Eyeballs |
| 7) One Hundred Stories | 17) Stupid Kid |
| 8) Calling All Skeletons | 18) Private Eye |
| 9) Cringe | 19) Time to Waste |
| 10) Break | |
| | 20) Radio |



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