

Dean Owens: *Into the Sea*

Producer: Neilson Hubbard

Recorded: Mr Lemons Studio, Nashville, USA

Released 11 May 2015, Drumfire Records



Press comments about previous Dean Owens albums:

Fantastic... Bob Harris, BBC Radio 2

Rocks like the E-Street Band... Uncut

Scotland's most engaging and haunting singer-songwriter... Irvine Welsh

Scottish singer/songwriter **Dean Owens** has made a habit of doing his own thing. This troubadour's unique blend of Celtic Americana is grounded in the idea of "home" while forever keeping a wandering eye on the road. Six solo albums in - following three with his previous outfit The Felsons - Dean has made a habit of taking new turns, both sonically and as a songwriter, and *Into the Sea* is no exception. This is a deeply personal record that enjoys moments of heartache, loss and longing, but flecked with hope and joy. Dean sketches out moments in lives - both real and imagined - and finds a truth and warmth that few songwriters can even aspire to.

Into the Sea draws inspiration from all corners - from a rediscovered old school photograph to the twisting branches of his own family tree, from solitary winter days in the Big Apple to the trenches of World War One. Dean Owens tells vivid stories with beauty and colour. A collection of songs with distinct personalities that are rooted in the streets of Leith, Owens' Scottish hometown, but enjoy an appeal way beyond UK shores. *Into the Sea* is a record with roots in all senses of the word: musical, geographical, and familial. It is sweet and sublime, occasionally abrasive and often surprising.

Recorded at producer **Neilson Hubbard's** Mr Lemons Studios in **Nashville**, Tennessee, Dean gathered together a roster of razor sharp US players and singers to bring an infectious, swampy groove to his finely honed pop sensibilities and searingly soulful voice.

Long term friend and collaborator **Will Kimbrough's** presence is felt keenly. A highly rated singer-songwriter in his own right, a producer and also sideman to the likes of Emmylou Harris and Rodney Crowell, Will has played on most of Dean's solo recordings. The album also enjoys cameos from two incredible female singers: **Suzu Bogguss** and **Kim Richey**.

With producer Neilson Hubbard at the helm, the pair have hewn together some beautiful, beguiling arrangements. Music which innately understands the traditions and conventions of Americana and Celtic folk music, but gets playful; bending the rules, blending the power pop of Beck or Nick Lowe with the spectral magic of The Waterboys or Calexico, cut through with flashes of Aimee Mann, Bruce Springsteen and Tom Waits.

This is the third album Dean has recorded in the US, following on from *New York Hummingbird* (New York 2011) and is his second album in Nashville, after 2008's acclaimed *Whisky Hearts*.

Into the Sea is a joyously contradictory record. Dean looks out to the horizon while knowing instinctively where his music was born and raised. It captures the spirit of his breath-taking live performances, be it one man and a guitar or with his six-piece band, The Whisky Hearts. More than being held in rapture by Nashville's charms, he has embraced all it has to offer to create songs that are fused with a perhaps familiar energy but also a unique musical style.

For more press information, interviews, hi res photos, CDs, MP3s, press tickets etc, please call **Morag Neil** on **0771 288 0965** (email info@scarybiscuits.com)

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**March
2015**

Dean details the inspiration, writing processes and memorable moments from the recording of *Into The Sea*

The songs are mostly very local in setting and very personal. Many of them are set here in Scotland, or Leith to be more precise, with a strong Celtic flavor, but I wanted to blend that with my love of Americana. I've done a lot of travelling in the States and always felt really at home there, Nashville in particular. It truly is a music city and it's given me lot of opportunities. I believe it's the fastest growing city in the US with everyone, from Jack White setting up his Third Man Records empire there and The Black Keys, setting up shop there. Then you have all the great singer-songwriters, as well as the more traditional country, bluegrass musicians, and the good old honky tonks like Tootsies and Robert's.

I tend to take something that happened to me or someone I know, and turn a true story into a wee work of fiction. I'll use people's names, but usually change them to protect the guilty. When I was worried the lyrics were too parochial or personal, Neilson's advice was always: *'Ask yourself - what would Tom Waits do?'* That was his way of saying I should always go with my instincts on a song. It became a catchphrase for whenever we encountered a challenge when recording and it never failed me.

Dora

This is a song about my Grandmother Dora Salvona Owens. I learned a few years back that the Salvona family had a travelling circus in Scotland that Dora grew up in. I wrote this about Dora, the circus performers and some of the people I found back there in the family tree. You never know what's up there.

Closer To Home

This was inspired by a letter home from a soldier during WW1.

He was almost home when he wrote to his wife – *'the closer to home, the harder it is to bear the distance'*

Evergreen

Over the past couple of years I've lost people who were very dear to me and a lot of friends have gone through difficult times. I was thinking of them when I wrote this. Kim Richey's voice just lifts the song to a special place.

Kids (1979)

This is a true story about an old school friend. I got the idea for this song after finding my old school football (soccer) team photo. I was just looking at all the kids and thinking about what happened to them all.

Virginia Street

I was out for a drink with a friend in Glasgow one night and he got to reminiscing about the place he lived in on Virginia Street in Glasgow. He talked about sitting there with his woman and listening to an old record by Kris Kristofferson and he just made it sound like the happiest time of his life.

It Could Be Worse

I still hadn't finished the song the night before recording it. I finished it around 5am when I got the line *'it's only dreams keeping us apart'*. So often in this business chasing down the dream takes you away from your loved ones. I was still writing the lyrics out when the musicians arrived at the studio. We decided to have one run through of the song, before going for a take. Thankfully Neilson was recording it and the run through was THE take.

Up On The Hill

There's a hill near where I live in Edinburgh where I walk my dog Alfie. Up there I'm able to find a little solitude and time for reflection. I think everyone has a special place they like to go to ponder things.

Valentine's Day In New York

I wrote this while I was staying at the Chelsea Hotel in New York. It was Valentine's Day and I found myself wandering the streets alone, hanging out, going to the cinema on my own - while all my friends who lived there were spending time with their sweethearts.

Days Without You

This was written for a friend who was faced with losing his partner to a terminal illness. I loved singing this with Nashville singer Heather Donegan.

Sally's Song (I Dreamed Of Michael Marra)

This song came to me in a dream around around the time that Scottish singer-songwriter Michael Marra passed away. In the dream Michael was sitting at the piano singing a song and this was the melody he was singing. There were no words I could remember apart from *'it'll all work out'* and the name Sally stuck in my head for some reason. Around that time I'd gone for a wander through the old neighbourhood where I grew up. There was a housing scheme [project] called The Fort that had been my playground. It had recently been knocked down. Some of the characters from my childhood make an appearance in this song.

The Only One

This was written for the same friend I wrote *Days Without You* for. I wanted a retro Everly Brothers feel so Will Kimbrough and I teamed up on the vocals.

I'm Pretending (I Don't Love You Anymore)

This is an old song of mine that originally appeared on my debut album, *The Droma Tapes*.

My friend Suzy Bogguss really likes that album and I've always felt this song would work well as a duet. I was over the moon when she agreed to sing it with me. It's just a good old-fashioned honky tonk love song.

ARTIST: **Dean Owens**
TITLE: **Into The Sea**
CATALOGUE No: **DRMFR018**
BARCODE: **5060265340186**



TRACK LISTING

1. **Dora** (05:33)
2. **Closer to Home** (04:40)
3. **Evergreen** (04:07)
4. **Kids (1979)** (03:14)
5. **Virginia Street** (03:47)
6. **It Could Be Worse** (05:56)
7. **Up On The Hill** (03:54)
8. **Valentine's Day in New York** (03:13)
9. **Days Without You** (03:15)
10. **Sally's Song (I Dreamed of Michael Marra)*** (04:51)
11. **The Only One** (04:28)
12. **It Could Be Worse - reprise** (01:25)

Bonus track

I'm Pretending I Don't Love You Anymore (04:13)

*Note for radio: Expletive in 2nd last line of *Sally's Song*. Radio friendly version available on request

MUSICIANS

Dean Owens – singing, strumming and whistling

The Seasideers:

Will Kimbrough – guitars, mandolin, mandola, backing vocals

Neilson Hubbard – bass, acoustic guitar, piano, keyboards, percussion, vibes, backing vocals

Evan Hutchings – drums & percussion

Jen Gunderman – piano, organ, accordion, harmonium

Plus

Michael Renne – upright bass

David Henry – cello

Eamon McLoughlin - violin

Joshua Britt – backing vocals on *Dora*

Special guest singers –

Suzy Bogguss - *I'm Pretending I Don't Love You Anymore*

Kim Richey - *Evergreen*

Heather Donegan – *Days Without You & Dora*

Into The Sea was produced, recorded and mixed by **Neilson Hubbard** at Mr. Lemons, Nashville, Tennessee

Mastered by **Jim DeMain** at Yes Master, Nashville

All songs written by Dean Owens and published by Myowensongs

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