

BAND OF CERTAINTY Twist and Sway (Seven Songs)

Interview with Scott Kaplan of Band of Certainty August 17, 2020

Tom: Band of Certainty has three core members with a bit of history in this town. How did you meet up and what have you done musically in the past?



Scott: Mike and I came to Seattle in 1989 to be guys in a band and at that we succeeded. Tammy was amongst our first friends when we got here. At the time, we made a fun eclectic album in a band called Albert Figures. The album was called *No Bad Dogs* and it is actually getting a re-release on GMR alongside the new recordings. There is some fine playing on that record. That was a lively time to be in Seattle. Joe Skyward was our first bass player. He went on to do some other stuff....hmmmm....I can't recall. Also that is where I met the fabulous Sue Orfield. She continues to entertain and amaze in The Tipton's. I never miss their shows when they come to town. In sum, Mike and Tammy and I have been good friends making music for a

long long time. I think we expect to go out that way.....

Tom: How did this particular project come about, what made you decide here and now?

Scott: I have often wondered if I am applying myself correctly. Should I do this or should I do that? This project came about in answer to that query. And, this is a good way to explain our goofy name. Occasionally, but regularly, I tend to be overwhelmed by certainty of the absolutely positive kind. Evangelical self-absorbed certainty. In this long and fortunate life, I have learned that many of these convictions have been completely mistaken. What to do? I think these songs here are the best of my convictions and the best way to express certainty. I had to express these things and every word is true.

Tom: You brought in a few folks to play with the A-team — who are they and why'd you get them?

Scott: One of the best parts about making a record is collaborating with the many people involved. I used the GMR speed dial to get a hold of both Dan Tyak and Glenn Slater. Dan was an easy choice as he is the most sought-after pedal steel guitar player in the NW. I have loved the PSG since my college days of wearing out the grooves on my copy of the Byrd's *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* and various Gram Parsons records. I think those days are mandatory for indie rock aspirants. Glenn was a completely wonderful surprise. I loved his former band The Walkabout's and I listen to their album *Scavenger* to this day. I had no idea that GMR could reel him into this project. I am so glad that came about because he added so much.

Tom: You've done this album over the last year and in particular thru the pandemic. What has that experience been like?

Scott: Covid has made this a much harder and longer project. The BOC was none too refined as we headed into the studio. So all the sorting through and the assembling of parts was more drawn out because of the isolation and distance. On the other hand, the technology involved in recording has come so very far. You really can trade files remotely and make real progress. The most striking example of this is the fact that I have yet to meet Glenn in person!

Tom: You've not released any music for a long time. Is this a flower in the desert or the beginning your Victory garden?

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Scott: It is true that it has been a long time since I put out anything. It goes back to that returning sense of certainty. It is fun to have that urgency now. I think these songs are useful. Or, they are useful to me anyway as meditations of a sort. If it seems that other people find them worth a listen, I would like to follow up. I do indeed have more to say. I heard on NPR the other day that an indie band got paid \$4 dollars by Spotify for 2000 streams. I will say right here and now that if Spotify hands me \$10, I will be booking a studio pronto.

Tom: Green Monkey is re-releasing a couple 1990's recordings with an old band of yours, Albert Figures. On that release and this new release, you do the song "Repetition." The versions are pretty different. In the words of DeAndre Cole, "What up with that?"

Scott: Yes, I did go back and revisit that song. Much of *Twist and Sway* involves going back and trying to improve upon previous efforts. I took a hard look at aspects like my vocals. My vocals are a bit 'unique' for better and for worse. I wanted to add some melody and some sweetness. I got two fine singers to help balance the equation. With "Repetition" I wanted a more specifically drawn lyric. As a younger person, I don't think I got to the heart of the matter. It is in fact better now....deeper. I did take a stab at some real philosophical reference with this song.

Tom: Scott, I know you are a big Hamilton fan. Which role would you choose to play if given the chance? What appeals to you about that role.

Scott: I won't gain any indie rock credibility for geeking out over Hamilton. But, man o man, Hamilton is an achievement. Every lead in that show takes a star turn and they are all superior. The vocals in Hamilton are of a sort I cannot even imagine for myself. If I could Angelica I would. I do love H. Mulligan's raps. I would like to think that if you 'knock me down I get the fuck back up again' too.



Scott sent these thoughts to KEXP on why they should play this album. If you are thinking about it, pretend you are KEXP and read on.

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Dearest KEXP,

With the briefest of moments for you to consider our Aug 21st release of the album *Twist and Sway (7 Songs)*, we would like to direct your attention to Song #2. "The House Song" is the loneliest existential Americana lament you will hear all year. And, this feat is achieved all without mention of whiskey or cigarettes. We hope you make it past the 2:15 mark where you will hear some stunning vocals by Tammy Madsen.

And, if you enjoyed that one, try song #1, featuring Glenn Slater from The Walkabouts. With a nod to Keith Richards, this song pays tribute to both the howling of our canine friends and also to regrets. This song is filled with regrets. It is a rock song.

Ok, to be frank, song #3 is our band trying to do our best Al Green. Normally, a confession of imitation like that would be dangerous, fraught with ethical perils. However, because Al Green floats on a cloud far out of reach, we gave it a go. No one who hears that song is going to accuse us of sounding too much like Al Green. This song is nothing like Al Green but it does have some clever word play.

Song 4 is a duet of forlorn loss.

Song 5 is deep and a bit psychedelic.

Song six is a bit Graham Parker-ish

Song 7. was made on a challenge dare to write the best kids song. Did it!

Band of Certainty is the most recent project of Scott Kaplan. A longtime Seattle musician, Scott found local airplay on KCMU in the 90's with his band Albert Figures and also made the local rotation at KEXP with Juke in the 2000's. This record features the talents of sought-after studio musicians Dan Tyak on pedal steel guitar and Rebecca Young on bass. Scott, Mike and Tammy have been friends forever. Yes, that is Mike's son on drums. We hope you like it. We think it is pretty darn good!

Sincerely, BOC