



ARIEL POSEN (HE/HIM)

MANITOBA – ROCK/ROOTS

Canadian singer-songwriter and guitarist, Ariel Posen, has seen his creative growth expand with each album. Posen's latest release, *Reasons Why*, showcases ten selected tracks from an original pool of 30. He defines his music as roots, incorporating elements of rock, blues, soul, Americana, and pop. Growing up in a musical household, Posen began his career as a sideman to numerous artists before focusing on his music. His songwriting skills were honed during the 2020 lockdown, resulting in songs reflecting personal experiences and observations, addressing themes like relationships, mental health, and personal development. Though still young, his music career carries the weight of a lifetime of experience and he is committed to improving with each new project.

BAND OF HORSES

WASHINGTON – INDIE ROCK

Band of Horses, known for their emotionally intense music, channeled the generational anxiety of the early millennial years into powerful art. Their songs, filled with life advice, have become anthems for fans. The band's sixth album, *Things Are Great*, documents singer-songwriter Ben Bridwell's shifting life connections, but isn't about nostalgia or regret. It aligns more with the pattern of the hero's journey and ends on a hopeful note for all.

BCUC

SOUTH AFRICA – AFRO-PSYCHEDELIC

BCUC, originating from humble beginnings in Soweto, has become one of the world's most celebrated bands, playing globally significant festivals like Glastonbury and Afropunk Brooklyn. They see their music as a hedonistic trance and a tool for political and spiritual liberation. Recognizing their transformative performances and fearless work ethic, they were awarded the prestigious Womex Artist Award in 2023. The seven-piece band is known for its Indigenous funk and high-energy performances, giving voice to ancestral traditions of Indigenous peoples. Inspired by the spirit world of ancestors, their music blends jazz, hip-hop, and punk-rock, offering an intriguing journey through modern Africa. BCUC's music confronts the harsh realities of the voiceless, particularly uneducated workers. They portray Africa as rich in tradition, rituals, and beliefs.

BIOGRAPHIES

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BENDIGO FLETCHER

KENTUCKY – INDIE FOLK ROCK

Louisville band, Bendigo Fletcher, released their second full-length album, *Two Things At Once* in March. The album features a new single, "Upcountry Lemonade." The opening track sets the album's tone, portraying a story of self-liberation and embracing the future. The upcoming release pulls together folk, psychedelia, indie, alt-country, and rock elements, resulting in 11 anthems marked by storytelling and songcraft. Ken Coomer produced the album and the recording took place in Nashville and Memphis. The lead vocalist, Ryan Anderson, describes the album as a testament to finding joy and peace amidst life's unpredictability.

BOLA ORIYOMI & ARIYA AFRIKA CULTURAL GROUP

MANITOBA – FAMILY

Bola Oriyomi is a storyteller and cultural performer focused on singing, dancing and drumming that has been performing for over 25 years. Hailing from Ondo state in Nigeria, Bola was immersed and trained in traditional Yoruba culture and dance that has inspired her work and passion for the arts. She draws inspiration from traditional African folktales and her experiences throughout life to create engaging stories and performances. Bola has performed across Canada and around the world, and also heads Ariya Afrika Cultural Group, a contemporary African dance group. Bola's work has been featured on CBC Radio and local television stations. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Education and Yoruba as well as a degree in History from the University of Winnipeg.

BONNY LIGHT HORSEMAN

ILLINOIS/NEW JERSEY/VERMONT – FOLK

Bonny Light Horseman, a band consisting of Anaïs Mitchell, Eric D. Johnson, and Josh Kaufman, has joined the Jagjaguwar family. Their music is permeated with wisdom, humour, and depth gained from years of experience in the music industry. Their genre-defining folk music addresses love, loss, hope, sorrow, community, family, change, and time. The band's bond makes each member better, braver, and more vulnerable, evident in their harmonious voices. Their lead single "When I Was Younger" openly addresses motherhood and maturation, with a raw energy that is necessary and beautiful. The track, recorded at Levis Corner House in Ballydehob, County Cork, also features the ambient sounds of the pub's crowd, encapsulating life inside and outside of art. As the band prepares for a new album, they embody grace and the understanding that life is best lived amidst imperfections.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



CALEY WATTS

BRITISH COLUMBIA – ROOTS

Caley Watts, a Cree singer-songwriter from Bella Coola, British Columbia, grew up in the Nuxalk Territory, surrounded by riverbanks, mountains, and rainforests. Her music, a fusion of folk and roots, is deeply influenced by these natural elements. Her upcoming album, *River's Daughter*, comes after three years of mentorship and collaborations with renowned artists such as William Prince, Serena Ryder, and Katie Pruitt, among others. Caley belongs to the Saddle Lake Cree Nation near Edmonton, Alberta, and is an adopted member of the Nuxalk Nation.

CHOIR! CHOIR! CHOIR!

ONTARIO – POP

“Why see a show when you can BE the show!” Choir! Choir! Choir! is the fully interactive, participatory show that turns audience into performer! So get ready to laugh, dance and **SING!** your hearts out with hundreds of other music-lovers just like you. It's like a big birthday party for the greatest songs of all time and you're invited! So grab a friend (or ten), and come out ready to GIVE IT ALL YOU'VE GOT! - all voices welcome, no experience necessary. **They Teach, You Sing! Everyone Wins!**

Since 2011, **Choir! Choir! Choir!** directors **Daveed Goldman + Nobu Adilman** have blurred the lines between performer and audience, traveling the world to create harmony with strangers and friends alike. They've collaborated with renowned artists like Patti Smith, David Byrne, Brandi Carlile, Rick Astley, Rufus Wainwright, and even Kermit The Frog at New York's Lincoln Center, creating memorable videos that have garnered views in the millions. Now it's your turn to SING!, so grab your friends, get your tickets and we'll C! you there! **#NeverStopSinging**

COWBOY JUNKIES

ONTARIO - ALTERNATIVE COUNTRY

In 1988, Cowboy Junkies revolutionized the music scene with their quiet, beautiful, and reflective album, *The Trinity Session*. Combining folk, blues, and rock, this album stood out amidst the flashy late '80s music scene and sold over a million copies. Formed in Toronto in 1985, the band includes siblings Michael, Margo, and Peter Timmins, along with Michael's lifelong friend Alan Anton. Over 26 albums, the band has remained stable, never breaking up or pausing. Their success lies in the mutual appreciation and understanding of each member's contributions. The band will perform a show spanning their entire career, including their new album, *Such Ferocious Beauty*, released in June 2023.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



DIRTWIRE

CALIFORNIA – ELECTRO-TWANG/SWAMPTRONICA

Dirtwire, a band adept in traditional and modern instruments, delivers unique and immersive live performances. Their shows alternate between energetic and ethereal beats, showcasing their mastery of various instruments from West African kamale ngonis and jaw harps to electric 12-string guitars and laptops for beat creation. Their music daringly blends elements from different global music cultures, creating a fascinating fusion of tradition and experimentation. This intersection of live instruments and computer production in their performances results in their distinctive "back-porch space cowboy blues, swamptronica, and electro-twang" sound, placing them at the forefront of experimental electronic music production.

ELISAPIE

QUÉBEC/SALLUIT – FOLK/POP

Canadian Inuk singer-songwriter Elisapie has a deep connection to her Inuktitut language and homeland, Salluit, a remote village in Nunavik. She first gained recognition by winning a Juno Award in 2005 with her band Taima. Her 2018 album, *The Ballad of the Runaway Girl*, received several accolades, including a Polaris Music Prize shortlisting and a Juno nomination. Elisapie has performed at venues worldwide, including the SummerStage Festival in New York and the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal. Her music beautifully blends her cultural heritage with contemporary elements. In 2023, Elisapie released her fourth solo album, *Inuktitut*, featuring ten classic rock and pop songs from the 60s to the 90s, translated into Inuktitut. Each song holds personal significance, creating a deeply emotional, autobiographical album.

ETRAN DE L'ÄÏR

NIGER – TAUREG DESERT BLUES

Etran de L'Äïr, translating to "the Stars of the Äïr," is a renowned band based in Agadez, a city famous for its music in Northern Niger. Known for their "desert blues" style, they are a significant part of the city's thriving music scene, often performing at weddings, baptisms, and political events. Despite being the best-known and longest-playing group in Agadez, they remain somewhat peripheral. Etran is not just a band but a family collective. Formed in 1995 by Aghaly Migi, he integrated his younger brothers into the group over the years. Initially, they only had an acoustic guitar, but over the past decade, they acquired more equipment, including electric guitars. Today, the band consists of related members, fluctuating between 5 and 9 performers per event.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



GONE GONE BEYOND

CALIFORNIA/CUBA/NEW YORK/SPAIN – FUTURE FOLK

Gone Gone Beyond is known for their mesmerizing future folk music, an uplifting mix of acoustic, world, and electronic styles. They gained popularity with their album 2030 and have performed at major festivals like Envision, Coachella, and Red Rocks. Their music has been featured in films and TV shows, such as Netflix's First Kill. They recently released a new single, "Revolution", as a precursor to their highly anticipated forthcoming album. Fans describe their live performances as spiritual experiences, as the band encourages mindfulness and dancing.

GRACE POTTER

VERMONT – BLUES/ROCK/SOUL

In the summer of 2021, renowned musician Grace Potter embarked on a solo cross-country road trip. She developed song ideas during her journey, often jotting them down on postcards and motel notepads. After two more solo trips, Potter recorded in Nashville, resulting in her most unfiltered song collection to date, Mother Road. The album, a blend of memoir and narrative, redefines her understanding of her history, underscoring her journey to self-reliance. Mother Road, the follow-up to her Grammy-nominated album Daylight, combines elements of soul, blues, country, and rock-and-roll. Recorded at RCA's famed Studio A and produced by Eric Valentine, the album offers valuable insights into life, love, and belonging. After her extensive road journey and a poignant return home, Potter has found a level of creative freedom that has led to her most significant work.

HALF MOON RUN

QUÉBEC - ALTERNATIVE/INDIE

Half Moon Run's 2023 album Salt revisits their musical beginnings while introducing songs penned during the pandemic. The band's collaborative power, rooted in the chemistry between Devon Portielje, Conner Molander, and Dylan Phillips, remains strong. The album includes the single "You Can Let Go", described as a transformative journey, and "Alco", showcasing the band's mastery of song-structure.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



HELENA DELAND

QUÉBEC – INDIE FOLK

Helena Deland, a Montreal-based musician, creates songs that express what often escapes everyday language. Her inspiration comes from reading and casual walks. She released her debut album, *Someone New*, in 2020, followed by a collaborative album with fellow Montreal musician Ouri, called *Hildegard*. Helena launched her second full-length record, *Goodnight Summerland*, in October 2023. This album, an intimate collection of eleven songs, was published by Chivi Chivi and includes singles "Swimmer," "Spring Bug," "Bright Green Vibrant Gray," and "Strawberry Moon." Helena is currently touring worldwide on her first headline tour, "The Goodnight Tour." She previously toured North America and Europe, opening for artists such as Weyes Blood, Andy Shauf, Connan Mockasin, Soccer Mommy, and Iggy Pop.

IBIBIO SOUND MACHINE

ENGLAND - ELECTRO AFRO-FUNK

Ibibio Sound Machine's new record, *Pull the Rope*, introduces a fresh sound. Collaborating with Sheffield-based producer Ross Orton, the band's songwriting process transformed, resulting in a more instinctual and quick decision-making approach. The shift led to a tighter, more electrifying band, creating a record that is a sleek blend of house, post-punk, funk, Afrobeat, and disco. The album champions unity and shares the band's belief in the fundamental similarity of people, regardless of their origins. The lead single, "Got to Be Who U Are," is a globe-trotting, name-checking song, reflecting Eno's upbringing in Nigeria and Max's Australian conservatory training. With tracks like "Mama Say" and "Let My Yes Be Yes," the band delves into themes of female empowerment and political consciousness. "Pull the Rope" is a beacon of hope in darkness, promising an unforgettable soundtrack to life.

INN ECHO

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND – ROOTS/TRAD

Inn Echo, formed in Prince Edward Island in 2019, comprises three musicians from different backgrounds: Tuli from BC, Karson from ON, and Tom from the USA. They create a unique blend of traditional music, influenced by Irish, Scottish, and European traditions, infused with a modern twist. This ensemble composes most of their repertoire, incorporating pieces from other notable composers for enhanced effect. They have performed at renowned festivals worldwide, from Australia's Woodford Folk Festival to Scotland's Hebridean Celtic Festival and local Canadian events. Recognized as tradition preservers and tune creators, Inn Echo's music offers historical resonance with a contemporary feel.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



JAKE BLOUNT

RHODE ISLAND – AFRO-FUTURIST ROOTS

Jake Blount is an acclaimed musician and scholar recognized for his contributions to early Black American folk music. His band, The Moose Whisperers, won first place at the Appalachian String Band Music Festival. He received the Steve Martin Banjo Prize in 2020 and has performed at distinguished venues like the Kennedy Center and the Newport Folk Festival. His research has been featured at the Smithsonian Institution, Berklee College of Music, and Yale University. His debut album, *Spider Tales*, reached #2 on the Billboard Bluegrass Chart and was nominated for Album of the Year at the 2021 International Folk Music Awards. His 2022 album, *The New Faith*, which investigates traditional Black religious music in a post-climate crisis setting, received wide praise. He was nominated for Artist of the Year at the 2023 International Folk Music Awards.

JERRON PAXTON

NEW YORK – FOLK

Although only in his early 30's, Jerron Paxton has earned a reputation for transporting audiences back to the 1920's and making them wish they could stay there for good. Paxton may be one of the greatest multi-instrumentalists you have not heard of. Yet. This young musician sings and plays banjo, guitar, piano, fiddle, harmonica, Cajun accordion, and the bones (percussion). Paxton has an eerie ability to transform traditional jazz, blues, folk, and country into the here and now. In addition, he mesmerizes audiences with his humour and storytelling. He's a world-class talent who has been on the cover of *Living Blues Magazine*, the *Village Voice*, and has been interviewed on FOX News. Paxton's sound is influenced by Fats Waller and "Blind" Lemon Jefferson. According to Will Friedwald in the *Wall Street Journal*, Paxton is "virtually the only music-maker of his generation—playing guitar, banjo, piano and violin, among other implements—to fully assimilate the blues idiom of the 1920s and '30s."

JON MUQ

TEXAS/UGANDA – POP/SOUL SINGER-SONGWRITER

Jon Muq, a singer-songwriter from Uganda now living in Austin, Texas, sees music as a way to communicate with the world. His songs, influenced by African and Western music, are meant to provoke thought and resilience. He aims to create songs that connect with listeners on a personal level. Muq's upbringing in Uganda and experiences in America give him a unique viewpoint on life. He has seen hardship due to food scarcity and uses these experiences to write songs everyone can relate to, regardless of their circumstances. His debut album, produced by Dan Auerbach, and tours with notable artists like Billy Joel and Norah Jones, are helping him reach a wider audience.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



JOY OLADOKUN

TENNESSEE – FOLK/ROCK

Music artist Joy Oladokun, a black, queer, first-generation child of Nigerian immigrants, is celebrating a significant year with the release of her praised album, *Proof of Life*. The CD, featuring collaborations with various artists, underscores the joy of existence while also expressing complex life experiences. The New York Times and Associated Press have lauded Joy, calling her music "conversational and confessional" with "hooky but profound melodies." Joy is known for her captivating performances and is currently touring. She has performed at the White House and on several TV shows, and her music has been featured in many TV series and documentaries.

KAIA KATER (SHE/HER)

NEWFOUNDLAND - AMERICANA/OLD-TIME

Kaia Kater's upcoming album, *Strange Medicine*, is a powerful tribute to women and oppressed people throughout history. Kater's songs engage in a dialogue with historical figures and contemplate her own contemporary life. She used her time since her 2018 album, *Grenades*, to reinvent herself, attending film school to learn composition and delving deeper into her songwriting. The album was born from a desire to write with absolute honesty, leading Kater to create songs that reveal the perspectives of women and revolutionaries. Co-produced with Joe Grass, the album features Aoife O'Donovan, Allison Russell, and Taj Mahal. It presents a mix of surprising genres like minimalist composition, jazz drumming, and film scores. *Strange Medicine* is a significant step in Kater's career, and a celebration of self, offering a Black feminist perspective on a genre that often overlooks Black women.

KILLER MIKE (HE/HIM)

GEORGIA - RAP

Killer Mike is a versatile figure known for his work as a rapper, advocate, entrepreneur, and social activist. He frequently addresses issues such as police brutality and systemic racism through his lyrics, speeches, and interviews. This has earned him Billboard's inaugural 2020 Change Maker Award. His recent album, *MICHAEL*, garnered three 2024 Grammy Awards for "Best Rap Album," "Best Rap Song," and "Best Rap Performance." As an active solo artist for over 20 years, he is also part of the popular duo, Run The Jewels, which has released four albums. Their latest, *RTJ4*, reached the Billboard 200's Top 10 and was voted the best album of 2020 by NME.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



LEITH ROSS

MANITOBA – FOLK/SINGER-SONGWRITER

Leith Ross, a music creator from a small town near Ottawa, Canada, currently living in Winnipeg, Manitoba, found their career path altered by the lockdown. While previously an ordinary college graduate, Ross used the quarantine period to write songs and share them online, eventually gaining popularity and emerging as an Internet-famous artist. Ross's family environment was non-musical but was filled with diverse music influences, which shaped their own song writing style. Notably, their Scottish heritage and the music of The Proclaimers were significant influences. Ross's music often reflects their personal experiences, including coming out as gay and later as trans, and their struggle to find their place in the world. Originally planning on a traditional music career trajectory, Ross's sudden online fame has given them the opportunity to touch others with their vulnerability through music, an experience they find humbling. Ross continues to create music and learning along the way.

LIBBY DECAMP

MICHIGAN – FOLK/OLD-TIME

Libby DeCamp is a singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist from Detroit, Michigan. Her songs evoke the spirit of roots music from bygone eras, drawing inspiration from prewar blues, old-time string bands, beat generation poetics, early R&B, and country western. With one foot in the past and an eye on the future, Libby is a writer who tugs at the ageless thread of truth-telling, social justice, and communal spirit through song, and tramps into continuous new territories- even at times bordering on the mystical and psychedelic. Her sharp lyrical edge and sweet, bluesy, un-prettied voice come from the gut and create something delightfully rare- whether solo with guitar in hand, or in the full picture of her band's unique string and groove-centered alchemy.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



LUCINDA WILLIAMS

CALIFORNIA/TENNESSEE – AMERICANA/ROCK

Lucinda Williams, the multi-Grammy-winning artist, released her sixteenth studio album *Stories from a Rock n Roll Heart*. This album is a testament to her resilience, having recovered from a stroke in 2020 that affected her motor skills. Despite the inability to play the guitar, her songwriting and vocals remain exceptional. Music has been a part of her rehabilitation, leading her to co-write songs with her husband, Tom Overby, and others. The recording sessions started in November 2021 and continued into 2022, yielding an album that resonates with the spirit of community and resilience. The album features collaborations with artists like Bruce Springsteen, Patti Scialfa, and Margo Price. It also pays tributes to late musicians like Tom Petty and Bob Stinson. Despite the challenges she faced in 2020, including a devastating tornado, a pandemic, and a catastrophic stroke, Williams' music has been her solace and strength. She remains an influential force in the music industry, as evidenced by her recent accolades, including a Grammy in February for Best Country Performance.

MADELEINE ROGER

MANITOBA – FOLK/SINGER-SONGWRITER

Madeleine Roger, a Canadian singer-songwriter from Winnipeg, is known for her remarkable songwriting abilities that combine lyrical mastery with endearing melodies. Her debut album, *Cottonwood*, an exploration of femininity, equality, and love, earned her nominations for "English Songwriter of the Year" at the 2020 Canadian Folk Music Awards and "Producer of the Year" at the 2019 Western Canadian Music Awards. Her upcoming album, *Nerve*, produced by Josh Kaufman, is set for release in 2024 and delves into the complexities of love and loss. Madeleine has shared her music at numerous festivals across Canada and Europe. She also co-produced and co-engineered *Cottonwood* with Lloyd Peterson at Paintbox Recording in Winnipeg, emphasizing gender parity. The album was composed in a Manitoba cabin built by her great-grandparents.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



MALI VELASQUEZ

TENNESSEE – FOLK

Nashville-based singer-songwriter Mali Velasquez's debut, *I'm Green*, is a deep dive into the journey of young adulthood. Velasquez's music reflects her transition from the Texas panhandle to Tennessee's verdant foothills, with a mix of openhearted and sharp lyrics. Her voice is a blend of uncertainty and determination that resonates with listeners. The lead single "Tore" addresses themes of shame and self-sabotage. The album uses discomfort as a path to release, emphasizing acceptance. The opening track "Bobby" is a poignant response to the loss of her mother, capturing fleeting memories. Velasquez's journey also led to a newfound appreciation for nature and a disciplined love of oil painting. She collaborated with producer Josef "Jos" Kuhn to record the album. The closing track "Death Grip" reflects on the passage of time and the struggles of long-term relationships. *I'm Green* is a meditation on loss, shame, and the transformation that comes from surrendering to their potential.

MAMA CUTSWORTH'S FAMILY DANCE PARTY

MANITOBA – FAMILY DISCO

Since 2015, Sarah Michaelson (also known as Mama Cutsworth) has been creating a joyful, multi-generational experience with her Family Dance Party in Winnipeg. As a respected DJ for 20 years, her music spans various genres and eras, including soul, indie pop, and disco. The show is highly interactive, featuring dance games and props, appealing to all ages. The event emphasizes emotional awareness, body positivity, and gratitude for the land and Indigenous communities. It has been featured at various locations including the Winnipeg Pride Festival and Festival du Voyageur, and is set to be part of the Winnipeg Folk Festival in 2024.

MAMA'S BROKE

LOUISIANA/NOVA SCOTIA – FOLK

Mama's Broke is a dynamic folk duo, Lisa and Amy, known for their compelling performances full of raw energy. Their Canadian roots heavily influence their music, and they skillfully blend different musical instruments and traditional dance into their act. Their unique compositions draw from various genres, creating a familiar yet innovative soundscape. Since their formation in 2014, they've gained momentum, completing tours in Europe, Canada, and the U.S., performing in diverse venues from circus shows to concert halls. Their debut album, *Count the Wicked*, was released in 2017, winning them a Canadian Folk Music Award and an ECMA Rising Star Award nomination. The duo is committed to challenging borders and promoting freedom of expression and community through their music.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



MARIJO ET MICAH

MANITOBA – FAMILY

In a vibrant celebration of music and theatrical joy, the eccentric and charismatic Marijo and sidekick Micah captivate audiences with performances that have earned them nominations at the Canadian Folk Music Awards, Western Canadian Music Awards, and a Parents' Choice Recommendation. Their show is a bilingual celebration of fun and kindness aimed at young audiences. Micah, who released his first solo album in 2023, was inspired by icons like Fred Penner, Al Simmons, Jake Chenier, and Carmen Campagne. He and Marijo aspire to leave a lasting musical legacy. Their journey across Canadian provinces is more than a series of shows; it's an opportunity to inspire, forge new friendships, and share the joy of music with the next generation.

MEDICINE SINGERS

NEW YORK – NATIVE AMERICAN POWWOW

The Medicine Singers blend experimental music with traditional Native American powwow styles, introducing listeners to various musical genres rooted in Native American music, from psychedelic punk to spiritual jazz, minimalism, and electronic music. Their unique live performances often involve the audience encircling the band, creating a trance-like experience that blurs the boundaries between band and spectator, psychedelic rock, and traditional powwow. Their debut LP on Stone Tapes has been praised for exploring various musical genres influenced by Native American music, providing a fresh perspective on the sound of the powwow drum and emphasizing the influence of Native American music on rock music.

MISCELLANY OF FOLK

IRELAND/NEWFOUNDLAND – FOLK/TRADITIONAL

Formed in 2022, Miscellany Of Folk is a touring act comprising three musicians from Ireland and Newfoundland. They bring diverse life and music experiences to the stage, with notable touring and studio recording achievements. Their music spans from Europe to North America, offering a repertoire of songs and instrumental music. The band's performances are dynamic and intimate and take audiences on a musical journey through folk music. The band members, Billy Sutton, Benny McCarthy, and Eddie Costello, are united by their love for music and passion for creating new arrangements, bringing a fresh perspective to the folk genre. Their engaging style and rustic music create a captivating experience. The sum of their talents results in the harmonious ensemble known as Miscellany Of Folk.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



MOONTRICKS

BRITISH COLUMBIA – ELECTRONIC/FOLK

Moontricks, the electro-folk duo of Nathan Gurley and Sean Rodman, based in Western Canada, draws inspiration from nature's cycles. Their music fuses organic folk, roots rock, old-time blues, and modern electronic production. Their breakout hit "Home" has achieved over 5 million streaming plays, and their tracks have featured on various TV networks, including Netflix and Fox Sports. They released their debut album, *Currents*, revealing a blend of introspective writing, soulful blues, basslines, and electronic arrangements. Their live performances, which feature a variety of instruments and electronic elements, have garnered a loyal following. *Currents* is an album about feeling comfortably lost, finding joy in seeking, and being okay with uncertainty.

MT. JOY

CALIFORNIA/PENNSYLVANIA – INDIE FOLK

Philadelphia quintet, Mt. Joy, named after a rural town in Pennsylvania, has significantly impacted the music scene since their formation in 2016. Their debut album, *Mt. Joy*, featured "Silver Lining," a hit that topped AAA radio and has over 120 million Spotify streams. Their second album, *Rearrange Us*, received widespread acclaim. Over the past four years, Mt. Joy has accumulated over half a billion streams and praise from leading publications like NPR, Billboard, and Rolling Stone. They've graced stages at festivals like Lollapalooza, Austin City Limits, Bonnaroo, and have toured with notable bands like The Lumineers and The Head and The Heart. They've also performed on multiple talk shows including Stephen Colbert and Jimmy Kimmel.

NADAH EL SHAZLY

EGYPT – EGYPTIAN EXPERIMENTAL ELECTRONIC

Nadah El Shazly is a Cairo-based producer, vocalist, and sound artist. Her music, a blend of 19th century Egyptian concepts and modern electronic idioms, has been showcased at numerous festivals worldwide. Her debut album, *Ahwar*, was ranked 12th on The Wire's 'Best Albums of 2017'. El Shazly collaborates with fellow Egyptian musicians Maurice Louca and Sam Shalabi, and recently formed the duo Pollution Opera with Welsh artist Elvin Brandhi. She has also pursued acting, starring in the film *About Her* and appearing in the Netflix series *Love, Life & Everything In Between*. She is currently finishing two film scores and preparing for her second album release in 2024.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



NEAL FRANCIS

ILLINOIS – PSYCHEDELIC ROCK 'N' ROLL

Neal Francis's album, *In Plain Sight*, is a deeply personal, introspective work inspired by his experiences living in a presumably haunted church in Chicago. The album, recorded almost entirely in the church, mixes various musical styles, reflecting Francis's background in ragtime, gospel soul, and blues. The music reveals Francis's struggles with relationships and sobriety, symbolized through the church. *In Plain Sight* gained critical acclaim and its singles charted well, with Francis touring extensively in support. The album's dreamlike quality is attributed to Francis's late-night songwriting sessions and experimentation with analog synths. Despite the challenges, the experience significantly developed Francis's musicality, enhancing his skills as a pianist and songwriter. He also released an EP, *Sentimental Garbage* (ATO Records), in November 2022, which includes standout tracks recorded during the original album sessions.

NEW DANGERFIELD

LOUISIANA/NEWFOUNDLAND/NORTH CAROLINA/RHODE ISLAND – AMERICANA/OLD-TIME

The Black string band tradition has been forgotten, leading to fewer Black string bands. In 2023, a new band called New Dangerfield emerged to revive this tradition. Founded by award-winning banjoist Tray Wellington, New Dangerfield also includes vocalist Kaia Kater, bassist Nelson Williams, and fiddler Jake Blount. They honed their skills at folk festivals and in New Orleans jazz bars. While rooted in community and tradition, they embrace innovation, blending contemporary and experimental elements into their music. Inspired by their namesake, Dangerfield Newby, New Dangerfield aims to liberate the Black string band tradition.

NICK SHOULDERS

ARKANSAS – AMERICANA

Nick Shoulders' latest album, *All Bad*, encapsulates his unique brand of country music, balancing dazzling musicianship with punk defiance and a connection to country's roots. His songs deliver difficult truths while inciting joy and abandon. The album, released via Gar Hole Records, is the first LP with his longtime band, the Okay Cawdad, since their pandemic-imposed hiatus. It was recorded in a home studio on the Mississippi River's banks and spans a variety of early country styles. Shoulders' journey, from childhood exposure to southern gospel music to drumming for metal and punk bands, led him to form the 'Okay Cawdad' band in 2018. Their music blossomed in the south Louisiana alt-country scene, and their popularity skyrocketed after the release of 'Rather Low' by YouTube channel Western AF. Since then, Shoulders has been touring alongside notable artists and performing at major festivals. *All Bad* presents a body of work that is sublimely freewheeling and profoundly illuminating.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



NOAH CYRUS

CALIFORNIA – COUNTRY/FOLK

Grammy Award-nominated singer-songwriter, Noah Cyrus, emerged in the music industry at the age of 16. She has released platinum singles, including "Make Me (Cry)" and "Again" and her 2020 EP, *The End of Everything*, featured the triple-platinum "July" and gold "Lonely." Cyrus was nominated for a Grammy Award for "Best New Artist" and collaborated with PJ Harding for the 2021 EP, *People Don't Change*. She has performed at Coachella twice and appeared on several popular TV shows. Her 2022 full-length debut album, *The Hardest Part*, reflects her personal journey of strength and self-discovery. The next chapter of her career begins with the single "I Burned LA Down."

NOAH REID

ONTARIO – AMERICANA/FOLK

Noah Reid's third album, *Adjustments*, reflects on personal and societal changes he experienced, like getting married and the pandemic's onset. The album, recorded live at Union Sound Company in Toronto, was produced by Matthew Barber and features musicians like Christine Bougie, Joshua Van Tassel, and Bryden Baird. The album's lead single "Everyday" was written during the pandemic's early days, expressing feelings of forced solitude. Other songs like "Rivers Underground" and "Statue's in the Stone" meditate on love, human connection, and introspective honesty. Reid, a longtime musician who began composing melodies as a child, describes his creative process as following a line of thought and later understanding its meaning. He hopes the album will continue to provide insights over time.

ORVILLE PECK

CANADA/SOUTH AFRICA – COUNTRY ROCK

Orville Peck, since his debut album *Pony*, has stood as a unique figure in the country genre. When his constant touring stopped in 2020, Peck faced personal challenges which led to the creation of his latest album, *Bronco*. Peck describes the album as a deeply personal exploration into self-love and other themes, influenced by a mix of genres and the sounds of his hometown, Johannesburg, South Africa. This album marks the first time Peck has openly drawn inspiration from his South African roots. *Bronco* was produced by Jay Joyce and released in three parts, liberating Peck from the single-dependent culture. The album tells stories through lyrics and sounds, offering a rich, cinematic, and personal experience. Peck's iconic style has led to numerous fashion collaborations and has inspired thousands of tattoos. As a passionate live performer, Peck spent most of 2021 touring and will kick off a headline tour this April. *Bronco* is seen as the beginning of a new era for Peck and country music itself.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



PALMYRA

VIRGINIA – FOLK

Palmyra, a folk trio native to Virginia, combines traditional folk string instruments with harmonious songwriting. The group, which is now based in Richmond, includes Teddy Chipouras, Mānoa Bell, and Sasha Landon. Often likened to The Avett Brothers and The Wood Brothers, Palmyra's music displays influences from Appalachian and Midwestern Americana. Their complex arrangements give the impression of a larger ensemble. Palmyra has shown dedication in solidifying their presence in the Americana music scene. Their momentum is driven by their craftsmanship and commitment to an intimate performance experience, underpinned by the evident camaraderie among the group members. Palmyra has supported acts such as Watchhouse, Mipso, and Illiterate Light, and has been recognized by various institutions, including the Newport Folk Festival, American Songwriter, and The Boston Globe.

POLKY

ONTARIO – POLISH FOLK

Polky is a Toronto-based band led by multi-talented female musicians. They blend Polish traditional music with world sounds, creating a unique niche. They have performed at various venues and festivals and were officially showcasing artists promoting Polish and Eastern European folk to North American audiences. Their first EP, *Immigration* (2018), was inspired by Polish traditional music and immigration to Canada. Their debut album, *Songs From Home*, celebrates multicultural Toronto and their Polish roots. It was nominated for three Canadian Folk Music Awards in 2022 and won the Traditional Singer of The Year Award for band member Ewelina Ferenc.

POSSESSED BY PAUL JAMES

TEXAS – FOLK

Konrad Wert, known as Possessed by Paul James, has juggled a special education and advocacy work career for over 20 years while pursuing his passion for music. Despite working a 50-hour work week and raising a family in Texas, Wert has released five full-length albums, two of which topped the Bluegrass Billboard charts in 2013 and 2020. *Possessed by Paul James's* upcoming 6th album, *Fighting For Our Own Survival*, will soon be released, featuring life's journey-themed tracks like "See You On Sunday." This track was recorded live in Laramie, Wyoming, featuring Joe Macheret on fiddle.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



RAINBOW GIRLS

CALIFORNIA – AMERICANA/FOLK/ROCK

Rainbow Girls, a folk trio from California's Bay Area, blend harmonies, varied instrumentals, and profound lyrics into a captivating sonic mix. The trio, comprising Vanessa May, Erin Chapin, and Caitlin Gowdey, uses an array of vocal techniques and instruments for an engaging live performance. Their music delves into human experience themes such as love, self-reflection, and social justice. Their latest album, *American Dream*, encapsulates these elements in a new direction for their evolving sound. Formed in 2010 in Santa Barbara, CA, Rainbow Girls have performed internationally and domestically, from European street performances to UK pubs and US festivals.

ROMAN CLARKE

MANITOBA – ALTERNATIVE POP

Roman Clarke is a distinguished Canadian music figure known for his funk-inspired beats, smooth and elegant vocals, and powerful songs. His energetic performances are legendary among music enthusiasts and fellow musicians. While primarily a side musician, session player, and producer, Clarke's passion and years of experience shine on stage. He leads a band of dedicated hardworking artists, contributing to the vibrant music scene. Clarke had a productive span in 2022 and 2023, releasing three albums, including the genre-bending *I THINK ITS ALL A DREAM* and *I ALWAYS LIKED YOU*, both recorded at his home in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He has produced albums for artists like Joey Landreth, Taylor Janzen, and Field Guide and has written songs for Ariel Posen, Olivia Lunny, and The Bros Landreth.

ROSALI

NORTH CAROLINA – INDIE

Rosali, a North Carolina-based artist, grew up in a musical family, later merging this background with involvement in Philly's experimental and DIY community. Her debut album, *Out of Love*, was followed by *Trouble Anyway*, which expanded her folk-informed rock sound and included contributions from various artists. In addition to her solo work, Rosali has collaborated on multiple music projects, and her songs often emerge from lengthy improvisation sessions. Her 2021 album, *No Medium*, released with backing band David Nance Group, showcased her blend of structured songwriting and free exploration. In 2023, she released the guitar improvisation album, *Variable Happiness*, under the alias Edsel Axle. Her music, noted for its softly glowing, malleable quality, can appear refined or on the verge of unravelling. Her upcoming album, *Bite Down*, created with David Nance, James Schroeder, Kevin Donahue, and Ted Bois, is due on March 22, 2024, on Merge Records.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



RUTH MOODY

BRITISH COLUMBIA/MANITOBA/TENNESSEE – FOLK/SINGER-SONGWRITER

Ruth, a solo artist and member of the folk trio The Wailin' Jennys, has a dedicated fanbase, earned two Juno Awards, many nominations, and topped the Billboard charts. She has performed globally in sold-out venues. Ruth's solo albums, *The Garden* and *These Wilder Things*, were well-received by fans and critics. Her collaborations with Mark Knopfler brought her voice to a worldwide audience, and she performed in major venues like The Royal Albert Hall. Ruth's songs, often sounding traditional, hold an intimacy and honesty that is unmistakably hers. Her music has been featured in films, TV, and has been performed by many choirs and ensembles. Ruth has recently completed a new solo album to be released in 2024. She lives between Vancouver Island and Nashville and spends her time writing, hiking, and parenting when not touring.

SYML

WASHINGTON – INDIE FOLK

SYML, Brian Fennell's solo project, explores the essence of sanctuary through music. Born in Seattle, Fennell's journey from piano student to self-taught producer and guitarist shapes SYML's sound. In February 2024, he launched *FIN. Recordings* in collaboration with Nettwerk Music Group and Good Harbor Music, debuting with *The Walker*. His second album, *The Day My Father Died*, recorded at Studio X with producer Phil Ek, features collaborations with artists like Guy Garvey and Sara Watkins. NPR hailed the album as "euphoric," documenting Fennell's journey of growth. SYML's collaborations in 2023 include Lana Del Rey and George Fitzgerald.

SAM POLLEY AND THE OLD TOMORROWS

ONTARIO – MOTOWN/ROCKABILLY/SWING

Sam Polley, the youngest member of a musical family, formed his band, Sam Polley and The Old Tomorrows, in downtown Toronto in 2017. Recruiting local musicians with similar interests, including the Ferraro brothers, and veteran players Fraser Melvin and Jeff Giles, the band debuted to a sold-out crowd at Cameron House. In 2018, they recorded their first EP, *EP in a Day*, at Pacha Sound Studio. Following a cross-country tour with the Jim Cuddy Band, they continued to tour their EP into 2019. The band has recently released their debut album, *Time Forgot*. Their unique sound is a blend of 50's and 60's rockabilly, old country twang, and Motown swing, creating upbeat boogie tunes with catchy hooks.



SHANE GHOSTKEEPER

ALBERTA – COUNTRY/PSYCHEDELIC

Shane Ghostkeeper is a musician from Calgary, Alberta. He is most recognized for his songwriting, singing and guitar playing in the band Ghostkeeper. Shane spent his childhood and adolescence isolated by Northern Alberta's geography (High Level, Rocky Lane and Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement), listening to country music records and developing an admiration for individuals who could convey rich stories through song. Later, he expanded his musical horizons beyond these roots where he found another world in the self-aware genres of art rock and experimental folk. Here, he developed a storytelling language with which he could voice the traditional songwriting he grew up with. Now, he has come full circle with years of education and experimentation to make his first country music-inspired record. This exploration of country music is a dedication and tribute to his family and the stories they share.

SHAKEY GRAVES

TEXAS – INDIE ROOTS ROCK

Across his career, Austin, Texas-born artist Shakey Graves, whose real name is Alejandro Rose-Garcia, has tailored thrilling musical adventures for his fans. He creates unique experiences, from burning CDs in personalized bags to intricate scavenger hunts. He likens his music to a 'choose your adventure.' With the release of his new album *Movie of the Week*, Rose-Garcia is taking his innovative approach further. He's setting up a website where fans can shuffle a collection of alternate tracks and unique songs from the sessions to create new albums. This technology allows fans to take control over the destiny of the music. Rose-Garcia emphasizes that imagination is the key tool, encouraging fans to apply it to his music and create something new.

SHE RETURNS FROM WAR

SOUTH CAROLINA – AMERICANA

Hailing from the historically rich city of Charleston, South Carolina, Americana music artist Hunter Park is defining what it means to live in the modern South and be a trans woman and artist within this landscape. Combining folk-infused vocal melodies and evocative lyrics that capture the unfiltered human experience, *She Returns From War* is taking her seat in the Americana music world with grace, strength, and passion. In 2023, the project shows no signs of slowing down. From opening for Bernie Sanders at his presidential rally in Charleston, to performing at national festivals like Stagecoach and High Water Festival and with artists such as Pat Benatar, Band of Horses, and Nikki Lane, *She Returns From War* is sharing with the world what the modern south should look and feel like: inclusive, compassionate, unfiltered, and loving.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



SHOOGLENIFTY

SCOTLAND – CELTIC FUSION

Shooglenifty, formed in 1990 by musicians from the Scottish Highlands, Orkney, and Edinburgh, pioneered the fusion of traditional Scottish melodies with contemporary beats. Known for their vibrant performances, they've promoted Scottish music globally for three decades, achieving significant milestones such as being the first UK band to play in Cuba and the first Scots to perform in the Borneo Rainforest. In 2020, Shooglenifty celebrated its 30th anniversary and kicked off the year performing at Edinburgh's Hogmanay. Although the pandemic led to the cancellation of their gigs for the rest of 2020, the band made the most of the lockdown by releasing a new album. Their innovative style continues to entertain audiences worldwide.

STEPH STRINGS

AUSTRALIA – FINGERSTYLE GUITAR/SINGER-SONGWRITER

Steph Strings is a singer-songwriter from Melbourne, Australia. Drawing influences from various artists, she blends fingerstyle guitar with percussion, Celtic, blues, and folk sounds. After releasing her LION EP in 2023, she toured globally, selling out shows in Australia, the UK, Europe, and Canada. She also supported The Cat Empire on their European and Canadian tours in 2023 and opened for Vance Joy in Europe. Later in 2023, she headlined her own European tour, again selling out multiple shows. Steph has started making a name for herself in the global festival circuit, performing at various festivals in Canada, France, Germany, and Australia.

SYML

WASHINGTON – INDIE FOLK

SYML, Brian Fennell's solo project, explores the essence of sanctuary through music. Born in Seattle, Fennell's journey from piano student to self-taught producer and guitarist shapes SYML's sound. In February 2024, he launched FIN. Recordings in collaboration with Nettwerk Music Group and Good Harbor Music, debuting with "The Walker." His second album, *The Day My Father Died* (2023), recorded at Studio X with producer Phil Ek, features collaborations with artists like Guy Garvey and Sara Watkins. NPR hailed the album as "euphoric," documenting Fennell's journey of growth. SYML's collaborations in 2023 include Lana Del Rey and George Fitzgerald.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



TALL TALL TREES

NORTH CAROLINA – PSYCHEDELIC BANJO

Tall Tall Trees, the musical identity of songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Mike Savino, is a pioneer in experimental, DIY banjo music. Using his custom electrified banjo, the Banjotron 6500, Savino has been captivating audiences since 2009 with his unique blend of psychedelic folk, rock, and world music. His work, reminiscent of artists like Cat Stevens, Elliott Smith, and Pink Floyd, defies easy categorization. Savino often performs solo, demonstrating his exceptional skills with loop pedals, but he also collaborates with other artists like Kishi Bashi. He recently worked with JD Pinkus of the Butthole Surfers on the psychedelic banjo album *Ponder Machine*. His fifth LP, *Stick to the Mystical I*, is out now.

THE FRETLESS

BRITISH COLUMBIA/ONTARIO – CHAMBER FOLK

The Fretless, a Canadian quartet, are celebrated for their genre-bending sound, transforming traditional fiddle tunes and folk melodies into high-energy arrangements. Their distinct, multi-layered sound has won them numerous awards, including the Western Canadian Music Awards' Instrumental Album of the Year and the Canadian Folk Music Awards' Ensemble of the Year. Since their inception in 2011, they have toured globally, performing at prestigious venues like the Cologne Philharmonic and sharing the stage with Canadian fiddle legend, Natalie McMaster. Besides their performances, The Fretless are committed to inspiring the next generation of string players, supporting fiddle camps, masterclasses, and workshops worldwide. The group comprises Trent Freeman, Karrnel Sawitsky, Ben Plotnick, and Eric Wright.

THE GROGANS

AUSTRALIA – GARAGE SURF ROCK

The Grogans, a genre-fluid band from Melbourne, formed in 2016 and have consistently produced music, releasing three EPs and four albums to date. They've showcased their musical versatility, covering blues, surf, garage rock, punk, and psych. The band has not only supported major Australian and international acts like Ocean Alley, WAVVES, Hockey Dad, and The Chats, but also participated in numerous music festivals. Their single 'Nowhere To Be' led to a successful 27-date tour across Australia and New Zealand, with 14 sold-out shows. They also ventured into the UK/European market for the first time, selling out seven shows. After their debut UK/EU tour in spring 2023, they returned to Australia for more shows and released their second single of the year, 'I'm Not Sure'. They recently announced another tour for September-October, alongside their third single for the year, 'I Cannot Read Your Mind', and the release of their fourth album, *Find Me A Cloud*.



THE JAMES CULLETON SUPERFUN SHOW

MANITOBA – FAMILY

James Culleton, a Canadian contemporary multimedia artist and musician, breaks traditional rules with his Superfun show. This show is a platform for sharing songs about science, art, and music and offers tips on creating original art and music. Culleton's approach to life, driven by curiosity, compassion, and creativity, is contagious. He's based in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and has released ten albums, including two for children. His performances are often in French and English, reflecting his children's experiences in French elementary school in Winnipeg. Interactions with Al Simmons have influenced Culleton's work and he has performed at numerous festivals and venues in Manitoba. His public art can be found in playgrounds and communities, reinforcing a strong community connection. The James Culleton Superfun Show includes a lineup of Winnipeg's finest musicians for live performances.

THE KINGSTON TRIO

CALIFORNIA – FOLK POP

Fans of legendary folk icons The Kingston Trio can re-discover their timeless music all over again. In celebration of 60-plus years of music, the iconic folk group performs their best-loved songs as part of the 'Keep The Music Playing' national tour. All three current members, Mike Marvin, Tim Gorelangton and Buddy Woodward, have intrinsic links to the original group: Mike is the "adopted son" of founding member Nick Reynolds, who was also his musical mentor; Tim, a friend of John Stewart since he was in his early twenties, is one of the few musicians outside the Trio who has recorded with Nick Reynolds; and Buddy Woodward, a highly regarded musician who has worked with former Trio member George Grove.

THE LOSTINES

LOUISIANA – AMERICANA

The debut album, Meet The Lostines, from songwriters Casey Jane Reece-Kaigler and Camille Wind Weatherford, blends golden-age rock & roll and old-school country. Originating from New Orleans, the duo's music is characterized by lush harmonies and songs about heartbreak, old relationships, and vulnerability. Their songwriting process is influenced heavily by their band and New Orleans. Both musicians, raised by musical families in the Pacific Northwest, were drawn to New Orleans, and their band came to life after they sang together at a campfire. Their album is an invitation to enter their world, featuring songs that soundtrack the night, with contributions from other musicians in the New Orleans community. Their collaborative album bridges the gaps between genres, offering a unique blend of music that charts its own geography.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



THE MESSTHETICS

WASHINGTON, DC – ART PUNK JAZZ ROCK

Brendan Canty and Joe Lally, ex-Fugazi members, and guitarist Anthony Pirog formed the Messthetics in 2016, reinventing the power trio concept for the modern era. Their debut album, featuring eight originals and a cover, was released in 2018. The trio's music balances intensity and accessibility, with Pirog's intricate guitar work complemented by Canty's fluid rhythms and Lally's steadfast bass. Initially blending noise and dance grooves, the music has evolved to maintain its structure despite complex time signatures and a heavy sound, engaging listeners without overpowering them. The band's performances exude love and gratitude, reflecting their collective journey.

THE STANLEY COUNTY CUT-UPS

MANITOBA – BLUEGRASS

The Stanley County Cut-Ups, a quintet, coves all bluegrass elements, from banjo solos to four-part harmony singing. They've performed together, in various setups, for nearly 20 years. Their performances, which feature bluesy mandolin breaks and powerful fiddle tunes, are highly appreciated by audiences. The group includes Jess Reimer on bass, Jeremy Penner as fiddler, Jeremy Hamm on mandolin and fiddle, Tim Osmond on banjo/dobro, and guitarist T.J. Blair. Their vocal harmonies, are prominent in their original and traditional bluegrass-style compositions, featuring two to four parts. Their performances appeal to fans of classic bluegrass music.

THE WAR AND TREATY

TENNESSEE – COUNTRY SOUL

The War And Treaty, a music duo formed by Michael Trotter Jr. and Tanya Trotter in 2014, has become one of the most striking acts in American music. They recently received their first-ever Grammy nominations for Best New Artist and Best American Roots Song for "Blank Page." They also earned their first Duo of the Year nomination from the Country Music Association and a Vocal Duo nomination from the Academy of Country Music. Their unique sound blend is filled with passion and tenderness. Their debut album, Lover's Game, was praised by critics, with the Associated Press stating they are continuing their unlimited journey to the top of the music world. They have collaborated with top artists and have enthralled audiences globally by performing shows and opening for various music legends.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



TIA WOOD

SADDLE LAKE – ALTERNATIVE R&B

Tia Wood, a seasoned entertainer from a young age, toured extensively with her family, including members of the Grammy-Award-nominated group, Northern Cree. Educators, activists, and artists surrounded her upbringing. Tia gained popularity during the pandemic through her "Indigenizing" trends, comedy, and singing on TikTok, and now has 3% of North America following her on social media. Tia's iconic sound and look resonate with the growing cultural awareness in mainstream media, and she's predicted to become a significant cross-over artist. With songs like "Dirt Roads," Tia blends timeless sounds with modern realities, creating a fresh vision for Indigenous youth and romantics.

TIFFANY LIU

CHINA - TRADITIONAL CHINESE PIPA

Originally from China, Tiffany Liu is a proficient pipa player with over 20 years of practice and performance. She was admitted to Shenyang Normal University's Ethnic Instrument Performance program in 2010 and has achieved remarkable milestones, including winning the Northeast Three Provinces Traditional Instrument Invitational Competition in 2013. In 2016, Tiffany moved to Canada, introducing the Pipa to diverse audiences. She performed at events like the Illumination Festival of Canada Games 2023 and received the PEI Provincial Arts Grant in 2022 to produce her debut album, *Riding the Waves*. In 2023, she was nominated for the "Achievement of World Music" award at the Music PEI Awards. Tiffany expanded her music to include Celtic and Irish themes, gaining acclaim and integrating with the Canadian community. She embodies a global musician, merging cultures through her artistry and aims to share pipa and Asian music culture worldwide.

TRAY WELLINGTON

NORTH CAROLINA – PROGRESSIVE BLUEGRASS

Trajan "Tray" Wellington, a banjo player from western North Carolina, has made significant strides in his music career. He was first drawn to the banjo as a teenager and later gained recognition as a member of Cane Mill Road. His talent earned him the 2019 International Bluegrass Music Association's Momentum Instrumentalist of the Year award. In 2020, he released a well-received EP under his name, created his Tray Wellington Band, and signed with Mountain Home Music Company. His debut album, *Black Banjo*, has attracted significant attention, leading him to conduct workshops and perform at esteemed festivals. He's also appeared on various television shows and received positive media coverage, including a glowing review from the Wall Street Journal.

BIOGRAPHIES

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 13, 2024



WYATT C. LOUIS

TREATY SIX – FOLK

Singer-songwriter Wyatt C. Louis, a Plains Cree artist raised in Treaty Six Territory, has released his debut album, *Chandler*, named after his middle name. The album, released via Royal Mountain Records, offers a blend of country music with an indie and roots spin, influenced by Louis' early exposure to classic rock 'n' roll and softer-voiced influences. The album was recorded at Alta Sound in Calgary, Alberta, and features songs that explore themes of life, love, and gender norms. His surroundings influence Louis' music, often personifying sensations and textures through sound. His single "Dancing with Sue" celebrates femininity and challenges traditional gender norms. Another track, "Sundog," captures the harsh winters lightened by Chinook winds. With *Chandler*, Louis aims to follow the music's lead, using his home's sounds as a guide.

ZOON

MANITOBA – MOCCASINGAZE

Zoon, the musical project of Daniel Monkman, released their sophomore album *Bekka Ma'iingan*, a broad exploration of their Indigenous experience. The album title translates directly from Ojibway to 'slow down' and 'wolf', reflecting Monkman's clan connection and the pace of the album's creation. The core moccasiningaze sound is intact, with tracks like "Care" and "Dodem" showcasing the genre's diversity. *Bekka Ma'iingan* also features collaborations with Polaris Music Prize winner Owen Pallett and Grammy-nominated Michael Peter Olsen. The first single, "A Language Disappears", addresses the fear of Indigenous languages being forgotten due to colonialism. The album also explores Monkman's 'two spiritedness,' a part of their identity that they chose to share openly with the track "Niizh Manidoowig (Two-spirit)". This album is about acknowledging a part of Monkman that has always been there.