

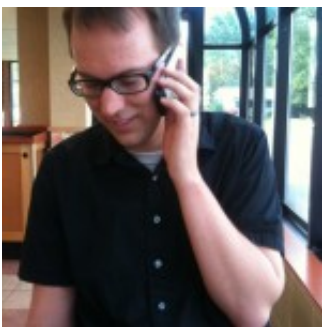
Interview: Michael Edwards [music]

How would you characterize your music? Do you (or others) put it into any specific genres?

MICHAEL: My music in the past has been very melodic, often soft, occasionally pop-oriented, with bright “colors”, you might say. Some of it is melancholy and other times enthusiastic and upbeat. A mix of keyboards, acoustic guitar, banjo, and other playful instruments. This has been evolving somewhat from the bouncy/bright sound to something a bit more grounded and darker, and this new album should demonstrate the shift. There are more parts for bass and electric guitar than before.

Is there a theme to the new album? Whether topical or style-wise?

MICHAEL: The new album deals a lot with death, mortality, and violence and explores it in a context of societal decline. Sounds pretty gloomy, huh? Maybe I’ve been reading too much Cormac McCarthy and Walker Percy lately. Style-wise, I’m trying out some different sonic palettes than before. Some Springsteen here and there, some Notwist, some Sufjan, Flaming Lips, Dylan, Radiohead.....but I don’t want to pigeonhole myself. I don’t start at the outset saying “What artists am I ripping off for this song?” But I am a big fan of those I just mentioned, for sure. (Join the club, I should say, as those artists are all quite popular).



Is this album different than previous albums you’ve done? If so, how?

MICHAEL: I don’t have much of a huge back catalog of “completed stuff” at this point, but this album is different for sure. I did an album for my family in 2005 (It was literally called The Family Album), which is very emotional and personal — something that perhaps could be described as “precious” or even inspire wincing in other listeners. In 2007, I put out a 5 song release called Snowy EP which was in many ways similar in style. There is some music even older than those two releases, but I can’t bear to listen anymore and those songs are more just evidence of my formative years in writing and recording music.

The new album, by contrast, is not in confessional form. It is a series of character sketches, stories, monologues, and descriptions. It's more detached from "me" in particular, though the characters speaking are not necessarily so detached. I think a bit less of "my heart is on my sleeve" will make it better to approach from the listener perspective. There is space there for the listener to have their own reaction and not just go "well, this guy is certainly feeling a lot, isn't he?"

Do you play/perform all the parts for the songs? Is there collaboration from friends?

MICHAEL: In the past I have performed pretty much everything on my recordings. This usually entailed drums, guitar, keyboards, banjo, and bass.

Recently, I have been reaching out to not only find new instruments and performers to include in my music, but also invite some collaborative effort to some of the songs. Jon Torrence (who performs with his wife Julie as [The Sojourners Song](#)) has been contributing trumpet to the record and that has been fantastic.

Sharon Kent, another friend, recorded some flute parts that really bring one of the songs together.

I am planning to harness the many talents of Ben Lucas (bandmate from previous bands The Modern Soviet Enemies, The Press Gang, and Stop Don't Stop) for some saxophone, guitar, and some background vocals.

Other musical colleagues can and will show up as time goes on.



What is your favorite part/worst favorite part about recording a new album?

MICHAEL: Lately, it has just felt great to be diligent and continue working on the record until it's done. In the past I have always written and recorded new songs, but I had a hard time collecting those together and putting out something that I'd be happy calling an album. It just wouldn't come together and I'd scrap it.

The best part of recording is when I feel I really nail a song or a mix and the excitement I get with that. The worst part is when I'm stumped or frustrated or unsatisfied with what is happening and just want to drag the entire project folder into the trash and give up. Thankfully these days I make myself sleep on it before I do anything impulsive like that.

What is your recording/mixing style? Where do you record, any specific quirks to your method?

MICHAEL: I'm not really a scholar of recording/mixing styles, but since most of my projects are done in an impromptu basement studio, multi-tracking everything alone, the goal of mixing is to try to make it sound like an organic performance, and not just 20 solos playing together. I am not a professional, though. I would describe myself as a "skilled hobbyist." I don't need my music to reach world-class production levels. At this point it's not the most important thing for the music.

I've been doing this kind of recording for at least 8 years, so I think I'm getting pretty good at it, given the constraints I have in terms of space, equipment, instruments.

I definitely take any mix out of the studio to check it out in the car, headphones, computer, "normal" real world listening locations. That step is absolutely essential to the production process because your listeners aren't going to be sitting in a studio with \$1000 monitors. They'll be using ordinary speakers and headphones.

Where can people hear your music or stay up to date with what you're doing?

MICHAEL: My 2007 release, Snowy EP, is available for purchase in [iTunes](#) and [Amazon MP3](#).

You can stay up to date on the status of the album by going to [my website](#).

Those interested can hear some samples of my music (including some upcoming songs from the album) at [my SoundCloud page](#).