

ALDORA BRITAIN RECORDS

The Underground and Independent Music e-Zine Issue 99, Wednesday 5th April 2023 "Tomorrow's Music Today"

FEATURING THE SOUNDS OF...

Bedsit, Velibor Nikolic, Spaceship and Son, The Vodka Tourists, Sparky's Magic Piano, Andy Pratt, The Barbarian Horde, James Carr Band, The Other Hit, and Miss Leo

Compiled and written by Tom Hilton

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"We all deserve a chance to join in the dance..."

Jacob Tucker, Grey Star Ghost

Highlight of The Day

This week's 'best of', the 'greatest hits' package. Our featured artists discuss origin stories, their influences, the sounds of tomorrow, and much more.



Tom Hockney, Bedsit: "It was different from anything we'd written before and required specific skills ... It wasn't like a punk song you could just smash out, it required groove and space and finesse. Writing it improved us as a band."

Velibor Nikolic, solo artist and Brigand: "I honestly don't think about my influences when I make or record music, but of course I have them. I have a fondness for all that pulpy shit, horror B movies, drug subculture, general kinkiness ... Sometimes I am into Bat Pussy, sometimes I am into Dostoyevsky."

Jut Kanewske, Spaceship and Son: "The recording was all ramshackle foot-stomps and long hours spent in lab coats ... I treasure these songs ... the memories of writing them ... then building them up into wonderful creatures of their own."

John Francis Hill, The Vodka Tourists: "I was working with new recording equipment and feeling a lot more comfortable with solo work ... Cambria represented a big step forward for my own songwriting. It was also a 'themed' album with each of the songs being interrelated and telling a single story."

Oli Bartlett, Sparky's Magic Piano: "I remember being fascinated by the melodies and how a simple string of notes could create these deep emotions. I wanted to create music like that. I spent much more time playing and writing than listening to music in the 80s."

Andy Pratt, solo artist: "I was initially struck by the cool sound and melodic approach that I had not really heard before. I had been listening to a lot of rock guitar up until then and I was taken by this different and jazzy approach."

E. Moustachio, The Barbarian Horde: "Make the listener laugh then hit them with a spot of melancholy when they're not expecting it. Music should be a rich tapestry of emotion, not a monochrome canvas."

James Carr, James Carr Band: "When I realised I could write about my feelings, it was a gateway to expressing all the things that were bottled up inside of me."

Pat Courtemanche, The Other Hit: "The first song we played was Van Morrison's 'Moondance', without even discussing it. It turned into a twenty-five minute jam band sort of rendition."

Miss Leo, solo artist: "I didn't want to refer to my music as 'bluegrass' because my music is not what is deemed to be traditional bluegrass. I put a more modern, soulful take on the genre with more focus on the vocals, melody and songwriting."



Open to Changes

Minneapolis' THE OTHER HIT provide the underground world with a beautiful and well-crafted collision of rootsy inclination, swampy drive, and harmony-driven folk rock. It is a classic sound, cleverly reimagined for contemporary times. Imagine the sounds of 1970s American radio, a soundtrack of songs and artists that would eventually be proclaimed classic, and blend it with the styles and approaches of the modern world. The Other Hit's audience is invited to this wondrous show and to enjoy the chimes of bubblegum pop, straight-up rock, soul music, crossover country, and singer-songwriter fare. The band's craft has been expertly captured on their 2022 long player *Diego*, featuring the acclaimed singles 'I Don't Live in Colorado (Anymore)' and 'Up on The Street (Swede Hollow)'. In recent weeks, *Aldora Britain Records* has been chatting to bandmember Pat Courtemanche. We discussed the group's origins, their influences, the *Diego* record, and much, much more.

The Other Hit have previously released their single 'I Don't Live in Colorado (Anymore) – The Remix' on Aldora Britain Records. Listen or download <u>HERE</u>.

If you enjoy this content, please consider making a small, magazine-sized donation at the following link: https://paypal.me/aldorabritainrecords. Thank you!

Aldora Britain Records: Hello Pat, how are you? It is a true pleasure to be speaking to one of the talented musicians behind The Other Hit at long last! I am a big fan. I was wondering if we could 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?

Pat Courtemanche: Hey Tom, I'm doing well. Thanks for asking me to do this and for all the support you have shown me and so many other independent musicians. Some of my earliest memories, period, are around music. I was really drawn to it at a young age. As a little kid, I loved hearing my parents' records. They mostly listened to crooners. Dean Martin, Andy Williams, Barbra Streisand, Sinatra. My favourite was Nat King Cole. I loved it all.



"The first song we played was Van Morrison's 'Moondance', without even discussing it. It turned into a twenty-five minute jam band sort of rendition."

In 1970, when I was seven years old, *The Partridge Family* TV show came on, and that was the game changer for me. They were my gateway to rock and roll. It's not cool to say you got your start with a fictional band, but lots of people my age started with *The Partridge Family*. It was a huge phenomenon. Some of it was awful, in retrospect, but they also had some great pop tunes, and David Cassidy had star power. I still get an endorphin rush when I hear their music.

Shortly after that, John Lennon released the *Imagine* album and that was the next thing that really sent me off. The beauty of being a music fan at that age is that it's a pure and organic experience. You don't think about what you like or what's cool. If you like it, you like it. It didn't strike me as odd at all to listen to *The Partridge Family* followed by Nat King Cole followed by John Lennon.

Like you, I consider myself a bit of a music archaeologist. I follow the trail backwards. So from there, I dug into The Beatles and all of the other great rock that preceded the year 1970. Eventually, I also worked my way back through folk and blues and jazz and country to learn more about the roots underneath the rock. It has been the most sustaining source of joy over the course of my entire life. It didn't take too long before I thought, 'I'd like to try to make some of that music myself'.



Aldora Britain Records: And now, let's take a leap forward to the beginnings of the brilliant Other Hit. This must have been an exciting time. It has certainly led to some great output since. How did it all come about? How did you meet the other members and what was the initial spark that brought you together musically?

Pat Courtemanche: The Other Hit is a funny kind of thing because it sort of operates on two separate levels. The very beginning of it goes back almost thirty-five years. Carla Colburn now Tollefsrud, Jim Tollefsrud and I were all working at the same place with office jobs in Minneapolis. We quickly discovered that we were all way into making music, so we got together and played some. It started mostly as a personality gel. Jim and Carla particularly gelled because they eventually got married. We were part of a cover band for a while with some other people.

Somewhere along the way, my friend Julie wanted to introduce me to her friends Andy and Linda, who were musicians. Julie thought we'd all be a good musical match. Jim Tollefsrud and I drove out into the country to meet these guys, thinking we would jam on E blues for an hour and go back home and that would be the end of it. But the first song we played was Van Morrison's 'Moondance', without even discussing it. It turned into a twenty-five minute jam band sort of rendition. We all stared at each other in silence when we brought it to a close. I'm sure my memory sweetens it up, but I distinctly remember it being one of those little magical moments. So, we've been with Linda Haus on bass ever since, probably around twenty-five to thirty years. Andy was a great drummer and singer, but he moved out of Minneapolis. But Carla, Jim, Linda and I have been in cover bands all those years with a bunch of other people under a bunch of different names. The longest running name being Candy with David Lauth and Randy Webb.

I said The Other Hit operates on two different levels. I've been writing songs all those years, but never imposed them on any of the cover bands we were running in. Around 2019, I started recording a bunch of my songs in a home studio. It was going to be a one-person production. But as the songs came together, they felt more like material for a band. All the work I put into it alone was so informed by what I've learnt from and with those other folks. So, I started cutting

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Carla, Jim and Linda into the process, and of course everything they touched sounded better. So, the release of *Diego* in 2022 was more or less the first thing we did with original songs in all of those years.

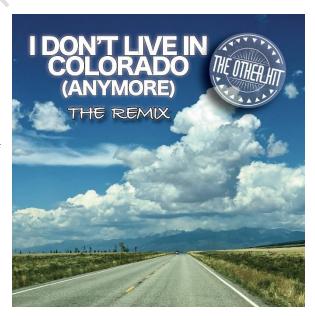
Aldora Britain Records: Let's talk about your glorious revival of 70s A.M. radio! I am talking about the timeless *Diego*, of course! This was the album that brought us together and it still holds a special place in my record collection. What are your memories from writing, recording and releasing this LP, and how do you reflect on it now as a whole?

Pat Courtemanche: The album *Diego* was three or four years in the writing and recording. It was a path that revealed itself as it went along, and it was very rewarding in that way. I thought I was just on a writing binge and that the topics and imagery were coming from all sorts of directions. But after the bulk of the songs were written, I looked at them as a batch and realised that in some way or another, they all related to trying to get a better understanding of my own life. The other thing that revealed itself as I went was that the sound I was going for reflected the influence that 1970s radio has on my brain.

Most of my memories are about the process and the discoveries along the way. It's funny, but I don't remember a lot of the details about writing each song or recording each track. The recording moments that are most memorable were the days we were adding Linda, Carla and Jim to some of the tracks. It was nothing short of a thrill to watch them do their thing on songs I had written, after watching them do their thing on other people's songs for so many years. Reflecting on it as a whole, the album makes me happy. I feel like it achieved its modest ambitions, and there is nothing that makes me outright cringe a year later. I'll take that result.

Aldora Britain Records: As we have both said, 70s A.M. radio! That sound is so big to the band's style. The approach is timeless, and it was definitely a 'golden era' of rock and roll. What appeals to you about this aesthetic, how do you bring your own fresh and unique spin to it, and who are your biggest influences and inspirations as a band?

Pat Courtemanche: I heard somebody say that the best era of music is whichever one was happening when you turned sixteen years old. I buy into that. I turned sixteen in 1978, and I consider that one of the best years ever for music. Ha, I do think I was extremely lucky, musically, for my sixteenth year to fall in 1978. What stands out for me about 1970s radio is how many different styles were played on the Top 40 radio stations. It was completely normal that Carole King would show up back-to-back with Sly and The Family Stone. You might listen for an hour and hear James



Taylor, The Stylistics, Poco, Roberta Flack, Jerry Reed, Stevie Wonder, and The Carpenters. My brain is wired like that. Again, I sort of figured out what was going on with *Diego* as it progressed, and it absolutely reflects the mix of styles that I was exposed to. Of course, my parents thought all the songs I listened to on the radio sounded the same, ha!

I can't tell you what appeals to me about the aesthetic. It's in my bones at this point. I'm made up of it. I have no choice in the matter. I do think that the naturalness of the sounds from that era appeals to me. All the synths and fabricated sounds that crept in during the 1980s didn't grab me as much, even though there was a lot of incredible material. I'd like to think that The Other Hit borrows from so many sources that we can't point to specific inspirations. Pretty much anybody in our age range in influenced by Dylan and The Beatles, and that is certainly there. But I counted up the obvious influence I could hear on the album, and I easily listed thirty or so artists without even stretching. And

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then a few people came around and said something like, 'I can really the Bowie influence'. What? I could list my top fifty influences and I'm not sure he would make the list. But I love Bowie, and I have no doubt his music has rubbed off on me. I just don't hear it.

There were a few things on the record where I was explicitly trying to sound like a specific something, rather than the full gumbo of hundreds of influences. On 'Candy', I wanted to sing it like I thought Rob Grill of The Grass Roots would sing it. The guitar solo on 'Colorado' is specifically meant to sound like *Darkness* era Springsteen from 1978. I tried to get a Curtis Mayfield feeling part on one song, and I was going for the *Laid Back* era Gregg Allman sound on another. So some of it was intentional like that, but most of it was just the process of osmosis.



Aldora Britain Records: I would like to focus in on the remixes, 'I Don't Live in Colorado (Anymore)' and 'Up on The Street (Swede Hollow)', two of my favourite tracks from the album. For each, what is the story behind the tune 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?

Pat Courtemanche: It makes me so happy that you single out those two songs, Tom. Those are both really important to me for very different reasons. The only reason we did those remixes in the first place was because you asked me about *ABR* putting out a single for The Other Hit, and I wasn't ready to record new music. One thing about *Diego* that I would have done differently is to have fewer tracks with fake drums from software. I wanted to get real drums on those two songs. This story gets kind of long, but I thought about who I would want if I could get any drummer. One

of those seminal songs from 1970s radio is 'Wildfire' by Michael Murphey from 1975. I could never figure out why I was so drawn in by that song over and over again in my life. A few years back, I closely studied it. Besides the fact that it is simply a great song and a great recording, I realised it was the drums that put me over the edge. They are masterful. It is storytelling drumming, patient and bold at the same time. So, I figured out how to get in touch with the drummer, whose name is Harry C. Wilkinson Jr. He lives and plays in Nashville. We talked and he agreed to play drums on the remixes. It blew me away. His playing is perfect. He wanted to know what the songs were about, so he could get the story.

It occurred to me after we had the recordings that getting Harry to play on two songs truly brought the project full circle. The *Diego* album was a homage to 1970s radio, and this was a guy heard on that radio every day for half the decade. I didn't put that all together until after we were done with the remixes. It was a gift. Harry and I became friends and we are working on more music. That was all because of you, Tom. If you didn't ask for material, none of that would have transpired.

The 'Swede Hollow' song is about a real hollow in the middle of St. Paul, Minnesota. It was an immigrant community from the 1840s until the late 1950s, and it was a real hard life. No cars could get down there, there was no plumbing or electricity. It was basically a lean-to village in some ways. It's a park now. I like to go down there and walk around. You can feel the spirits, the ghosts, of the hard times experienced on that land. It is fascinating, and it's very moving. Not far away is Mounds Park, which has Indian burial mounds and is truly sacred land. It is an amazing little part of the city and of history too. And hundreds of cars fly by those spots every day and pay it no mind. I wanted to write a song about it, but I was scared to write it for a long time. I didn't want it to be shallow or trite or overly sentimental,

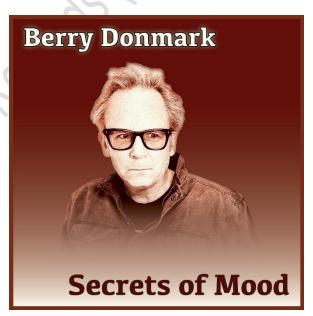
and I feared that's what would happen. But I gave it a shot and I like how it came out. I'm sorry if it sounds like I'm bragging, but I got what I was hoping to get in words, and that rarely happens.

'I Don't Live in Colorado (Anymore)' is more of a personal thing. I remember exactly how it came to be. A few years ago, I got invited to hang with a group of friends who all knew each other when we were teenagers. The stories that were flying around spent a lot of time on crazy shit we got into back then. There were lots of stories of people who got themselves in a lot of trouble or didn't make it through. Everyone who was there that day had their own burden they carried around from bad decisions. Anyway, one of the people who was there had moved to Colorado when we were much younger. Where I lived in Minnesota, Colorado was sort of a promised land to teenagers. A place you would go to smoke dope and ski all day for the rest of your life. What could go wrong? Ha! I thought that Dawn, who was at this gathering, still lived there, so I asked her how she liked it. She said, 'Oh, I don't live in Colorado anymore. I live in Utah'. That line jumped out at me and stuck in the back of my head.

A month or so later, I was driving through Colorado with my wife Tabitha, and it was just really beautiful. I felt like writing lyrics, but I didn't want to write another song about the beauty of Colorado. That's when 'I Don't Live in Colorado (Anymore)' jumped into my head, and I took it from there. It's a little bit about the strange and troubled characters who tie groups of friends together, even after they've lost touch. It's a little bit about the lost promise of what you imagine will be Utopia when you are finding your way in the world. Maybe it's about surviving despite yourself. I don't know.

Aldora Britain Records: More recently, you have branched out with some solo offerings under the pseudonym of Berry Donmark. These have really intrigued me and have shown another side to you as an artist. Can you tell me about these releases? More specifically, how does the songwriting part of your creative process work? Are you often drawn to specific themes or topics?

Pat Courtemanche: Part of my motivation is to move faster and get songs done and put them out one at a time. Making *Diego* was so enjoyable and satisfying, but I don't want to spend three or four years between getting songs out there. I put out a couple of solo albums in the 1990s and early 2000s before digital distribution. Those were under my government name, Pat Courtemanche, which is also what I use in The Other Hit. By adopting the stage name or alter ego – or whatever it is! – of Berry Donmark, it's sort of giving myself permission to go out on the ledge a bit more.



The writing process is the part of this experience that may be the most satisfying. It is this combination of inspiration and craft, and you are always trying to get them in the right measures. The truth is you don't control that. The two songs I've got coming out, 'Rain Drenched Sparrow' and 'Praying Tonight', are at different ends of the spectrum. One of them started as an idea, but then it was months of crafting the words and the music to support the idea. The other one came in a rush. I heard a songwriter say that once in a while you stick your hand out and it catches a song, and that's kind of what happened on one of these. If I could decide, I would want my songs to be 65% inspiration and 35% craft. But you take them as you find them.

I actually try not to be overly drawn to specific themes or topics. I love songs about hard luck and struggling to get by in the world. I definitely write some of those, but I see a lot of amateur songwriters like myself get overly caught up in that mode, and it's easy to slip into clichés. Right now, I'm drawn to trying to write some 'torch songs', that Tin Pan Alley approach. I don't know why. It's a work in progress, and I'd like to write some decent songs in that style for Carla Tollefsrud to sing. I'm going to try to get her to do some solo releases too, ha!

'Rain Drenched Sparrow' is basically a love letter to Canadian singer-songwriters and folkies. There is this incredible legacy in that style that has come out of Canada. Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell, Ron Sexsmith, Stan Rogers, Buffy

Sainte-Marie, Neil Young, Gordon Lightfoot, the list goes on and on. I like music that's about music, so I guess that's a theme that I'm a sucker for. I almost always start with the words. I feel like if you can write some good lyrics, there is a melody floating out there that is waiting for those lyrics. You just need to take the time to get your hands on it.

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist? Pat: Bruce Springsteen.

AB Records: Favourite album? **Pat:** *Blood on The Tracks* by Bob Dylan. A more recent favourite is *Trouble & Love* by Mary Gauthier, which feels like an updated *Blood on The Tracks*.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **Pat:** Jefferson Starship when they still had Marty Balin, Grace Slick and Paul Kantner. The opening act was Alvin Lee and Ten Years Later. Sort of a mini-Woodstock nine years after the original.

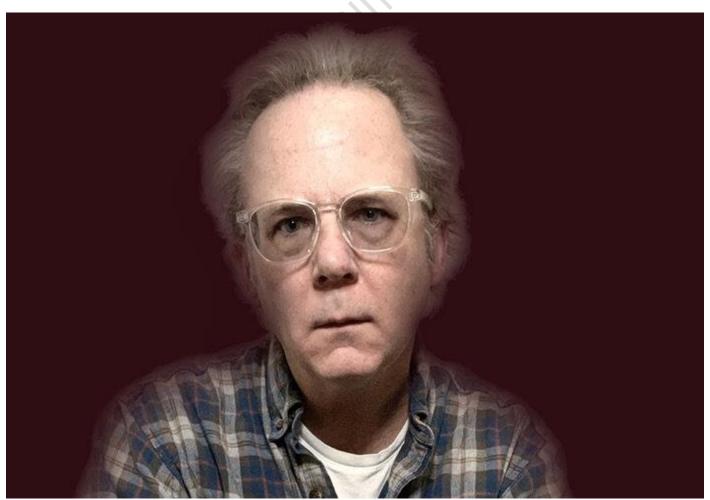
AB Records: Loudest gig as an audience member? **Pat:** Believe it or not it was Leon Russell playing solo in a club. I don't remember what year it was. He was touring alone with this elaborate set of keyboards and electronics. It was insanely loud. I stayed until the end just to prove I could, and it took about three years off my hearing.

AB Records: Style icon? **Pat:** The Band in the *Big Pink* era. I wish I could pull it off.

AB Records: Favourite film? Pat: I love concert films, and my current favourite is Summer of Soul.

AB Records: Favourite TV show? Pat: Green Acres. I love absurdist humour when it is well done.

AB Records: Favourite underground artist? **Pat:** Laurel Premo is an instrumentalist from Michigan. Her album *Golden Loam* is brilliant. Tom, you released 'Wild Cat' by Aldo Buzzi and that immediately shot to the top of my list of favourite underground artists in the rock mode.



All views, comments and opinions expressed within are those of the artists and organisations represented. Aldora Britain Records does not necessarily endorse off of these viewpoints.

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Rewind...

A B Records Issue 98 (March 2023)

Featuring Limitless Horizon, Blackcat Elliot, Gavin McMaster, Merilyn Steele, Le Fondeur de Son, The Triptamynds, Jester Society, Banjo Jen, Christy Merry, and Hypnotic Eye.

A B Records Issue 97 (March 2023)

Featuring OLD ERNiE, Jan Linton, Garrick Rawlings, Rooick, Electric Religious, Oppenheimer's Elevators, Theresa Pauli, Glass Island, The Utter, and King Thurber.

A B Records Issue 96 (March 2023)

Featuring White Star Bulb Company, Adam Hattaway and The Haunters, Mike Weaver, I Choose Izumi, Vetna, Armchairanarchists, The Greenings, Rhythm Bastard, Death by Dumpling, and Amusement Parks on Fire.

A B Records Issue 95 (March 2023)

Featuring Fog Holler, Chest Rockwell, Arthur Davenport, Crosby Tyler, The Evan Williams Project, Edward Rogers, Willie T & Doctor X, Overneath, Turkey Vulture, and The Rhino.

A B Records Issue 94 (March 2023)

Featuring Electric Horseman, Passilauma, Eric Harrison, Johnny and The Raindrops, The Leeches, Mythical Motors, Walker Brigade, Cimrya Deal, The Braam Brothers, and Oli Spleen.

A B Records Issue 93 (February 2023)

Featuring The Mal Thursday Quintet, John O'Sullivan, Marius Pibarot, Kissing The Flint, Anam Danu, Joel David Weir, Dain Norman & The Chrysalis Effect, Nightbird Casino, Tom Curless & The 45%, and Jackson Williams.

A B Records Issue 92 (February 2023)

Featuring Zhir Vengersky, Turtle Zwadlo, The Faded Out, Mylene L. Chamblain, Tommy Romero, Bill Hartmann, Library Man, Librarians With Hickeys, The 151, and The Co-Conspirators.

A B Records Issue 91 (February 2023)

Featuring Gaspard Oil, Five Things to Say, Peace for Old Ghosts, Catherine Traicos, Jenna Palensky, Grand Alpaca, Mizz Wizdom, Meli Tierra, The Merry Monster Men, and Wolf Prayer.

A B Records Issue 90 (February 2023)

Featuring The Dead Sea Sound, George Krakat, Rolan Garces, Have Blue, Sam Polley and The Old Tomorrows, Musicians Anonymous Cleveland, Sloe Gin, Sylvain Rollet, Serdimontana, and M-Opus.

A B Records Issue 89 (January 2023)

Featuring Val Esway + Global Spider Community, Necessary Animals, Molly Thompson, A Remnant Memory, Nicola Black, Versus the Obsidian Octopus, Arts, DPERD, Fox Green, and Body Lens.

A B Records Issue 88 (January 2023)

Featuring Josh Wunderlich, Darksoft, Hans Hjelm, Chris Church, Message Field, Slow Groan, Ars Pro Vita, King Bastard, DC Cardwell, and Ride Til Dawn.

And it's thank you to...

All the bands and artists from all around the world who have featured with Aldora Britain Records, it wouldn't happen without you. Malcolm Hilton for proof-reading every word in every e-zine, many hours well spent. Dana Berry for organising our Tomorrow's Music Today livestream events, a lot of hard work and a great exhibition of the true ABR spirit. Chris Chin from Mark Skin Radio, Boston, Massachusetts, for giving us the remarkable opportunity to have a mini segment in his weekly radio show, Christian's Cosmic Corner, and taking ABR to the next level. Indiana singer-songwriter extraordinaire Joel David Weir for all his support and kind comments, allowing ABR to reach a new audience and for more people to discover great new music, and of course, for your amazing records too. Holger El Pres for all your backing over in Germany, it is pretty special to have Aldora Britain Records radio specials broadcasting out of mainland Europe. Scott Gordon and James Walsh for curating the first ever Aldora Britain Records live music showcase, hosted in Gloucester in 2022, the first of many. Our label collaborators all over the world, including Red and Christina at Big Stir Records, Garry John at Button Up Records, and Justine at Red On Red Records. Rik Bardsley at Vox Office Media for all the fantastic artwork and additional promotion opportunities. Adam Signore for our weekly radio slot on his radio shows The Original Music Showcase and the Insomniac's Garage on Mark Skin Radio, out of Boston, Massachusetts. All those who have run promotional features on Aldora Britain Records – Andrea at Pinball Wizard in Italy, Andrew at The Uncarved Block in Scotland, Johnny at Mods Of Your Generation in England, and Sean at Target Radio in England.