

## The East Pointers // Secret Victory

Here's a fun fact about traditional music: it's not always old even when it sounds like something lifted straight from a vintage ceilidh. For proof, witness The East Pointers – or more specifically, *Secret Victory*, their exhilarating debut full-length album.

*Secret Victory* could easily stand beside any recording from any era in the illustrious Celtic/folk musical canon. Yet it features 10 brand new originals written by guitarist Jake Charron, fiddler Tim Chaisson and his cousin, banjoist Koady Chaisson, vocalists all and, in the case of the Chaissons, members of Prince Edward Island's reigning musical dynasty.

With *Secret Victory*, The East Pointers unwrap new possibilities in a musical style that dates back centuries yet is still relevant on multiple, divergent continents. Almost without even trying, the trio makes traditional music seem ridiculously hip. Also the most fun thing on the planet to dance (and raise a pint) to.

"That's something The East Pointers are trying to accomplish - breathe some new, original life into traditional music," confirms Tim Chaisson, whose solo career as a singer/songwriter (see 2015's acclaimed *Lost in Light*) is thoroughly established. "A lot of times, people think of it as music for an older generation but we're hoping to introduce a whole new generation of listeners."

Only a fool would bet against the band – an adrenalized, roof-rattling, performance monster - or their excellent new album.

Written in Australia during a January 2015 tour supporting The East Pointers' self-titled debut EP and essentially cut live off the floor at Hamilton, Ontario's Catherine North Studios a few months later, the self-produced *Secret Victory* is that rarest of albums: one that proudly wears its influences on its sleeve while fearlessly blazing its own musical trail.

"Traditional music is equivalent to soul music in my mind. It can take you to another place even if you haven't heard it before," Tim Chaisson says.

That's certainly true of a trio of songs on the album featuring Chaisson's plaintive lead vocals: the wistful, banjo-fuelled 'Last Blank Page,' the percolating, almost poppy rave-up 'Work That Way,' and the heavy-hearted 'Cold.'

"'Cold' is a unique track," Charron says. "We worked with (Newfoundland songwriter/producer) Chris Kirby on that song. I had the idea of someone having gone through something difficult in their life and having a hard time moving forward but at the same time knowing they can't change what's happened."

The downcast vibe doesn't linger for long on *Secret Victory*. The rest of the album is a series of free-wheeling, feisty instrumental jigs, stomps and reels - or some combination of the three - fired by Tim Chaisson's nimble fiddle, Charron's scorching guitar and Koady Chaisson's spirited banjo.

"We just really wanted to record original stuff. We all love composing and putting our own little style on something that goes back generations," explains Koady Chaisson, when asked if the idea of cutting tunes from the traditional songbook was ever floated as a possibility.

He continues: "We are literally the seventh generation of musicians in our family, and what we do is a little different than what our uncles might do, for example, which would be more Scottish influence. We embrace Scottish influence... but also Irish and French and so on."

"We went into the studio with the goal of making this sound as live as possible," says Charron, an Ontario native also hailing from a family of traditional musicians.

"This is dance music that's been around for hundreds of years," Charron adds. "It can be tough to replicate that in the studio but that's partly why we were all playing in the same room when we recorded - to try and capture that live vibe."

Even before releasing *Secret Victory*, The East Pointers knew they were onto something, having accepted the 2015 Music P.E.I. New Artist of the Year and Roots Traditional Recording of the Year awards. They were also nominated for Traditional Instrumental Recording of the Year at the 2015 East Coast Music Awards. And the band is very much in demand live, and set to return to the UK and Australia in late 2015 and again in early 2016 after extensive touring in Canada.

As for *Secret Victory*, perhaps no song presents a more complete snapshot of The East Pointers' coalesced talents than the title track. 'Secret Victory' is a ripping pair of new jigs, leading the instrumental charge of the album with energy and celebration.

"Jake has two pick-ups on his guitar allowing him to play guitar and bass at the same time, creating a big sound," Tim Chaisson explains. "I play a stomp-box with one foot and a tambourine with the other to add rhythm you wouldn't necessarily hear. And Koady usually step dances during that tune live - another tradition in our family - so it's great for a crowd to dance or clap along to."

Both Tim and Koady Chaisson confirm they were encouraged to preserve and uphold traditional East Coast music by members of the sprawling Chaisson clan. (Another fun fact: the Chaissons' grandfather Joe Pete Chaisson co-founded the Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival in 1976 to promote and fund traditional fiddle playing across P.E.I.)

What better way to keep the music alive than by cultivating a new audience swept up by its vibrancy and keen to attend live gigs?

"Everyone in my family either plays fiddle or dances. Music was always around us, and it was just a way of life," Koady Chaisson says. Adds Tim Chaisson, "Growing up, I was playing fiddle before I realized I was playing fiddle if that makes any sense. I think with any family tradition, it's introduced so young that it almost becomes second nature."

"One thing we've always loved about this music is that it's accessible to all ages," says Charron. "In Canada generally and on the East Coast particularly there is a lot of history and a lot of stories attached to this music. Even the instrumental tunes have stories behind them and hopefully this is something that can be passed on through future generations."

"We hope this record translates," Koady Chaisson says. "I guess that is every artists' dream when you put in so much creative energy. But really, being able to play this music for as many people as possible is our ultimate goal."

The East Pointers are well on their way.