

“But the life of man is of no greater importance to the universe than that of an oyster.”

David Hume, 1742

The above quote from David Hume, a Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, is what inspired the title of my latest album. To me it means that Life goes on. With us. Without us. Whether we do the right things, or the wrong things. And yet, what is happening in our lives can seem like all that there is in the universe. Especially when we are beginning or ending a relationship.

Some songwriters write breakup songs. Some write about, well, let's judiciously call it 'courtship.' Some write songs about nothing in particular.

This is an album of songs about falling in, and falling out of love.

These songs were composed (and decomposed, and recomposed) over several years. They weren't written together, meant to go together, or intended as variations on a particular theme. But when I took my first stab at putting together a song order for this album, there was clearly a relationship. And I chose not to ignore it. And so, "Life of an Oyster" takes us on a kaleidoscope of a journey through different moments when we are falling in and then falling out of love. Like a Picasso, each song looks at related events from a slightly different perspective, or from a different point of view. Some songs are more obvious and direct. Some are shrouded in metaphor and allegory. But when you take a step back they are all part of a related composition.

The album starts with arrogant, childish infatuation. Examines the chemical experience we call love. Watches us as we will build a life together. Then questions whether this is what really makes us happy. We will wonder why nobody told us love would be this way. Our memories will fail us. We will be sad. And we will act badly. And know remorse. We see the painful truth that sometimes when we break things, they just can't be fixed. We will face the prospect of life (and death) alone. We will long for what we missed, and discount all we have accomplished. And, in the end, we will be reminded that even if our lives are of no more importance than that of an oyster, they *are* important to us. . .and there are more important things to life than the scorecard.

I hope you enjoy at least some of these songs. There aren't too many albums where I love every song either. You will experience my eclectic taste in music, and find my personal nod to the gods throughout if you listen closely. Many of my favorite musicians, writers and songwriters make subtle and not so subtle appearances. The Police. Wes Montgomery. Miles Davis. The Bodeans. Buddy Holly. Clapton. Lyle Lovett. Steely Dan. Butch Walker. And too many more to mention. Oscar Wilde is here. John Locke is with us (the philosopher and the TV Character). Lewis Carroll. Moliere. Shakespeare. Xerxes. Einstein. Mandelbrot. Plank. Schrödinger. . .and the cats.

But at the end of the day, this isn't anything more than just an album I always wanted to make. These are songs I like. Full stop. I thought you might like them, too.

I couldn't have done this album without help. Even the ability to put a small home studio in the old home office didn't give me the talent to put this all together alone. And that's an important lesson. I thought I'd just knock this out on my own in a few weeks. But as soon as I got a couple of collaborators on board, well, it not only got better it was more fun. And it took 15 months to get it to where it is today. A lot of people donated their time and talents to this endeavor. I hope to be able to repay (or maybe just pay) you all one of these days!

Scott Hamilton. We first made music together in what was it 1987, maybe 88? In one session, neither of us had dates on Homecoming Weekend, and spent the day and night in the basement of the old Sigma Nu house at Washington and Lee University recording an instrumental called, appropriately enough, "Homecoming Weekend." Still the sexiest piece of music I ever participated in. After all these years in the wilderness, when I started putting this record together, Scott offered up his services first as drummer, then engineer, then frankly co-producer on a number of tracks. We bounced tracks back and forth from Virginia to Indiana for a few months, and then spent a cold, but incredibly instructive (for me anyway) playoff football weekend outside Indianapolis mixing a few tracks before resuming virtual mixing and mastering sessions. This album wouldn't be what it is without Scott's skills and talents in all the areas cited before and more. His percussion fundamentally changed how you will hear "Girlfriend", "Lost" and "Just One Day". He contributed percussion to several other tracks, but those three really have a whole new character because of his contribution. And the mixing and mastering. . . I cannot do what Scott does in this regard. His ear for the littlest details is remarkable, and better yet he can usually fix it. And his advice to add a chord here, add a female backing vocal there. . . a banjolin track. . . I can't thank him enough or give him too much credit. The things you don't like, the performances, they are mine and from my head and fingers alone (you know, except where otherwise credited). The quality of the product owes a large debt to Scott. And Tamara and Spencer, of course.

Tom Mayer. An old friend. Known him from the day I met his family to those many years ago in Tidioute, Pa. A year ago I had no idea he played harmonica. Got invited to a show of his band, Barrelhouse. Was, and continue to be, blown away. And his two contributions to this record? Well. Just perfect. Just perfect. Honored to have him on the record. As a terrific harp player. And a valued friend.

John Chamberlain. Never met the man. But over a syncopated string of four note chords and a little wing of a nod to Hendrix, he dropped in a terrific piano solo that I can only wish I had written.

Davis Klabo and Nicole Simmons. Finally I was able to draft them into service in the studio. Davis has some background vox layered throughout, but his big moment is starring as the Cheshire Cat. Thanks for your participation. Hope you had fun! Nicole plays the part of the sexy voiced temptress. And darlin' our record is skipping on the third song. I couldn't have imagined how good it's gotten to be. Or how everything could have changed in just a blink of an eye.

And finally, Barry Fantle and Bernie Jackson. (And also David Mikautadze at Sweetwater Sound.) Without these guys, I'd not have realized that I could put together a 'real' home recording studio at a reasonable price. It really wouldn't have occurred to me to get off my butt and actually do this project if I hadn't heard Barry's album and watched these guys chatter about their home studios. And the world would have greater entropy, if nothing else. Things that used to only exist in my head are now out there for you to hear. Life in this modern world is amazing. Whatever the oyster has to say about it.

Enjoy the record. Hopefully as much as I do. And thanks for all your support.

David Klabo. Spring, 2011