

TIME TO SHINE

Astoria musician Luke Ydstie releases first solo album 'Collected Essential Works'

Story by ANDREW TONRY

The time came, finally, for Luke Ydstie to put his musically broad shoulders in service of his own songs.

"It's in my nature to be a little dismissive of my own projects," he says. "A part of it is probably comparing it to the music that I've had the luck to be involved in."

Ydstie is speaking primarily of Blind Pilot, the acclaimed Astoria-Portland group in which he plays bass and sings backup vocals. But it splinters. That band sparked Hook and Anchor, which Ydstie plays in with Blind Pilot drummer Ryan Dobrowski and vocalist Kati Claborn, with whom Ydstie also shares a home and daughter, Hazel. In addition to other groups, Ydstie also plays with Portland's Allelujah Choir and in studio sessions.

"I think I'm more comfortable as a sideman for sure" he says, "I think that's where I have the most to offer." As well as his facility with numerous instruments — including guitar, bass and piano — humility makes Ydstie an ideal contributor. It also makes him a bit bashful when it comes to speaking about his own record, the just-released "Collected Essential Works."

Don't let the title fool you — the record is Ydstie's first.

"It's hard to come up with

an album name," he chuckles. "I mostly thought it was kind of funny."

The 10-song record, however, is earnest, a blending of crisp, strummy mid-tempo folk and sensitive, lilting, plucky Americana.

Playing mandolin since he was 8 and in bands since he was in high school, Ydstie has preferred largely to strum in service of others. But after the other groups put out records, and with Blind Pilot on hiatus, he finally

figured it was time.

"If we'd been on the road with Blind Pilot for the last couple years, this album probably wouldn't have happened," Ydstie says. "So when one thing isn't happening at the moment you start looking for other things."

"Collected Essential Works," has plenty in common with Blind Pilot and the rest of Ydstie's familial projects. It shares similar instrumentation,

tempos and dynamics, as well as an emphasis on airy vocal harmony. The shared sound isn't surprising, as it comes from the same cosmology. It was recorded in the same studio, Portland's Type Foundry, where Blind Pilot, Allelujah Choir, and Hook and Anchor have worked. It also features Dobrowski on drums and Claborn on vocals and banjo. Everything else, though, is played by Ydstie. And while at ease in the studio, the captain's chair was something else.

"I learned that making something where you have the option to put in almost unlimited things, the main part about making something that's going to be good, it's an exercise in restraint," Ydstie says.

As a lead vocalist, Ydstie is confident and crisp. (While pursuing music education at Portland State University, Ydstie studied in the vocal department.) And though "Essential Works" features Ydstie as director, Claborn might well be dubbed producer.

"Honestly I feel like I only started writing good songs after I met Kati and started writing songs with her," says Ydstie, ever deferring. "A lot of the songs on this record are written with Kati's help."

"There has been a lot of times where she's come up with a half a verse or a whole verse," Ydstie continues. "And I'm like, 'Oh man, I never even thought about it going that direction.' And it just blows the doors wide open, and it's so much more than it would've been otherwise."

As an example he points to "Tiny Fires."

"This was mostly me sitting at the kitchen table in the winter-time and thinking about things I needed to do on the house. Parts of it were falling down."

"This one feels like the most Astoria," Ydstie continues.

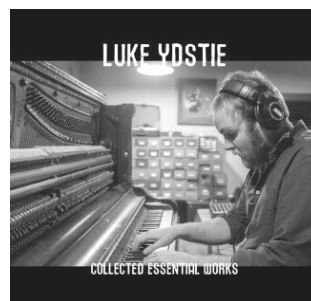
But then Claborn offered a "few little word choices that blew it open," Ydstie says, "and the song came to mean much more than that."

As on "Tiny Fires," the duo combines for the record's most memorable choruses. (Also see: "Deer Strangler.")



Photo by Joshua Bessex

Luke Ydstie, Kati Claborn and their daughter, Hazel, sit in their Astoria home. Ydstie is putting out his first solo album of folk and Americana music this month. He and Claborn, both members of Blind Pilot and other bands, will perform with others at three shows in Astoria Oct. 9, 10 and 11.



Submitted photo

Luke Ydstie's first solo album is titled "Collected Essential Works."

To celebrate the release of "Collective Essential Works," Ydstie and crew — including Claborn and Dobrowski, as well as Ydstie's brother Olaf on keyboards and Type Foundry's Adam Selzer on bass — have scheduled three consecutive performances in the Astoria area. They play Friday, Oct. 9 at the Voodoo Room; Saturday, Oct. 10 at 46 North Farm; and Sunday, Oct. 11 at Fort George Brewery. Saturday's show holds a particular reverence. It is a homecoming of sorts for Ydstie and Claborn, who lived on the Olney farm for a time, a significant portion of which they spent developing a shared musical language. Beyond the weekend of performances, Ydstie has little planned. Again, his humility kicks in.

"I like the songs, and I'm excited to put them out there," he says. "But I'm not laboring under the mis-intention that any-

body but my friends are going to feel that way about them."

From experience, Ydstie says, to expect anything more would be foolish. Plus it's going

where he wants.

"This is an album for Astoria and my friends," he says. "And there are enough copies for those people to get them, I think."

Concerts

FRIDAY, OCT. 9

9 p.m., Voodoo Room, 1114 Marine Drive, Astoria, 21 and over, no cover. Brian Bovenizer will open the show.

SATURDAY, OCT. 10

7:30 p.m., 46 North Farm, 89578 Oregon Highway 202, Astoria, \$15, pre-order at 46northfarm.com, only 40 tickets available. Brian Bovenizer will open the show; Portland singer-songwriter Shelley Short and Darren Hanlon will also perform.

SUNDAY, OCT. 11

8 p.m., Fort George Brewery, 1483 Duane St., Astoria, all ages, no cover. Brian Bovenizer will open the show.

Brian Bovenizer

Southside Chicago/Southwest Michigan born and raised, Brian Bovenizer landed in Astoria in 2009. Since then, he has been involved in music through the Hackles, Holiday Friends, Raincoat and Righty, and other one-off projects. Crafting a batch of original songs since high school, Bovenizer will be debuting a set of country-inspired songs with a group of musicians that have been self-described as the Koala Cowboys. Inspired by John Prine and Dr. Hook, the Koala Cowboys are surfing, horse-riding, country sonsa-bitches that look real cute, but will tear your face off with rhythm, sweat and beer.

Assembled especially for the Luke Ydstie Astoria Tour, the band consists of: Cooper Trail on drums, James Owen Greenan on pedal steel, Jeffrey Munger on guitar, and Luke Ydstie on bass.