



Alexander James Adams is "the heir" to carry on Heather Alexander's musical heritage.

and supporting humanity can be. As Heather, I always believed in dreams and fairytales and magic, but when I had to put it to practice for myself I wasn't actually sure if it was *real*. And everyone else has proved that it is."

The native Californian recently moved to Puyallup, Wash., but he was originally intending to settle in Portland. The first time he saw Multnomah Falls, Adams recalls, "I said, 'That's it, I gotta come up here!'" Although he ended up relocating to Puyallup instead—to help a friend—he is frequently in the Portland area and has a regular monthly gig at the Lucky Lab.

Adams says he first identified as trans two years ago but continued to perform as Heather Alexander for nearly a year, barely hinting that something big might happen. After her disappearance, he spent four months in isolation, giving testosterone treatment a chance to take effect before he emerged. "I'm a year old now," he jokes.

With a musical career spanning two decades and more than a dozen albums to his credit as Heather Alexander, Adams might be the most accomplished musician to have transitioned mid-career. For female-born singers, testosterone treatments can be frightening. The hormone thickens vocal cords, lowers the pitch and limits the range of a singer's voice. Even with intensive training, there's no guarantee that a singer's success will survive transition. Some trans men, like The Cliks' Lucas Silveira, forgo hormone treatment rather than risk their careers.

"I was really, *really* worried," says Adams. "At one point I decided...that if all went to hell in a handbasket I'd either be a really cool fiddle player or I'd move to New Zealand...and raise Jack Russells."

If his voice had failed him, he would've let his fiddle do the talking. It didn't come to that, but Adams says his voice still isn't consistent. "Somedays the pipes are there, and some days...they're not. I tell stories really well, so I can always go on with the show."

Before beginning testosterone, Adams recorded four songs and a full range of vowel sounds in his female voice. A self-described pagan, Adams has utilized the material to record a Christmas album creating a "unity of sexuality as well as spirit." He recorded his post-transition voice and married his male and female voices in the duets that fill the remarkable new album, *Winter Tide*.

Although trans musician Joshua Klipp did something similar with his groundbreaking song "Little Girl," *Winter Tide* is the first album with a series of these duets. "I went back and I

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—ALEXANDER JAMES ADAMS

listened to the tracks and I broke into tears," Adams says of the album. "It wasn't a sadness, it was...the huge awesomeness of these two spirits that I've been living with all these years [finally] united in a harmony."

When he was still a girl, Adams was groomed for Nashville by his father in hopes of competing with Crystal Gayle. Instead, he found a niche in the musical genre *filk*, which he describes as "folk of the Internet. There are so many wild, crazy things out there on the Internet, and this music reflects those. *Filk* started with circles of people that didn't play all that great...[or] even sing at all and would just tell stories. It's the old system of entertaining without having a television or a radio. It's a family, clannish sort of binding that happens between people."

At the time, Adams says, "I was writing...songs I felt only my stuffed animals would listen to. They were songs about rainbows and little river creatures. I was writing about fairy tales and castles and magic and elves. I thought, 'No one's going to want to hear those, that's not Top 40!'"

But Adams found an audience at a Society for Creative Anachronism event and says they have been faithful fans ever since. "They have stuck with me. They have just been so incredibly great. They laugh with me, the guys give me a hard time, the girls flirt with me."

He sees similarities between these alternative communities and the queer community. "They're kind of insular, and they're very proud of that. They get a lot of flak out there, too. Most people kind of wrinkle up their noses and say, 'That's kinda weird.' They are looked at as mental cases. There's a lot of real emotional abuse that goes on. That wounded spirit is something that I think the LGBT community can appreciate."

Adams hopes his story inspires others to "look at the mirror and say, *maybe*. When we stop saying maybes we just start dying. No matter what age we are. Each of us is a magical creature. Each of us has all that we need—we just need to believe that. It's never easily done. But if you want to be a hero that's what you have to do; you just have to believe." 10

ALEXANDER JAMES ADAMS performs during A Faire in the Grove, a Renaissance-style event presented by the Society for Creative Anachronism on April 26 at Pacific University, 2043 College Way in Forest Grove, and during OryCon Science Fiction Convention, which will be held from Nov. 21 to 23 at Marriott Hotel, 1401 S.W. Naito Parkway. He also will perform from 7 to 9 p.m. June 16, Aug. 18, Oct. 20 and Dec. 15 at Lucky Labrador Public House, 7675 S.W. Capitol Highway.



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