

ture I'll] conceive the visuals first, or I make little films for myself that I can score with a song," says Waller, who has a degree from Yale in art, specializing in video installation. "I love that idea as a method of writing."

Dark Unknown, according to Waller, was written from a "lonely, dark, visual-less place." But that doesn't take away from the richly spacious imagery the music evokes. "Shallow," for instance, showcases Waller's lyrical apex by bemoaning futile lunges at post-idealistic spiritual awakening. His characteristically acrobatic voice flutters over anxious, white-noise cellos and plaintive acoustic guitar, like someone coming to terms with the limits of his lightbulb life.

"I think that's maybe an experience a lot of people have who are my age," says Waller in reference to the track. "I feel like the late twenties and early thirties are rife with offensive awakening and great connections, and it actually kind of goes away and you're left there with these memories of great inspiration and epiphany. I'm not so able to recreate those anymore."

Whereas Waller's last full-length endeavor, *Troubled Times*—also released through his own Napoleon Records label—traversed a politically charged diatribe against the Bush era with yins of governmental admonishing and yangs of love-is-crazy entitlement, *Dark Unknown* focuses more on introspection.

"It has a kind of campfire, shamanic vibe," Waller offers of the album. "It sounds very much like a conjuring of a kind of magical, introspective space where maybe you're in a melancholy state but you're still in touch with the kind of ephemeral, magical vitality of being alive."

Certainly the fact that five of the album's 12 tracks are live—taken from recordings of "The Hope Chest" tour—cements that vitality, especially on "Qu'Appelle Valley, Saskatchewan," a rendition of Buffy Sainte-Marie's tribalesque stomper. The remaining seven tracks were recorded live-in-studio in single passes to further augment the immediacy of the album.

"There's certainly a lot about loss and relationships and search for love in the album," continues Waller. "The overarching theme in my mind is really about being at an age that's



Holcombe Waller performs at HRC's Bridges to Equality brunch

somewhere between being young and being old and seeing both sides of that and continuing forward."

And move forward, no doubt, Waller will.

In typical gangbusters fashion, "Surfacing" will see a quick premiere run in Seattle in June, then in New York in October, and here in Portland sometime in the fall. He's also trying to figure out how to tour in April following a trio of album release shows: February 20 in Portland at the Alberta Rose Theatre; February 24 in New York City; and March 2 in San Francisco. All in all, it's another busy year for the troubadour.

"There are certain touchstones, and there is a lot of positioning going around," says Waller. "I guess it's planned—that's one way to look at it." ☐

Celebrate the release of INTO THE DARK UNKNOWN with Holcombe Waller and the Healers Sunday, February 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Alberta Rose Theatre (3000 NE Alberta). Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door and can be purchased via albertarosetheatre.com. Special guests will include Storm Large, China Forbes and Matt Sheehy. For all things Waller, visit holcombewaller.com.

Give It Up

Portland's LGBTQ arts community embraces online fundraising

BY RYAN J. PRADO

Take a walk up and down Southeast Hawthorne on any given weekend, and you'll see at least a few different musical acts sardined onto a sidewalk street corner, busking their craft to the delight of passersby and nearby businesses alike. This seemingly yesteryear approach to generating some much-needed cash to the artists involved is both a way to raise funds and an opportunity for an audience to greet performers in an intimate way. And while busking is still a viable method for artists to drum up publicity and funds for upcoming projects—as is utilizing Saturday Market booths, pedestrian cold-sell techniques, etc.—more and more artists are turning to the Internet to raise money and to provide donation incentives.

Cover boy Holcombe Waller isn't the only one in Portland's LGBTQ creative commu-

nity to take to this approach. Filmmakers, comics writers, musicians and others have sought the supportive solace of sites like Kickstarter, GOFundMe and even good ol' Facebook to give their projects that extra push to completion. Kickstarter, in particular, has ballooned in the last year and a half into a must-use fundraising outlet.

By incentivizing the donation process, Kickstarter secures a place for those seeking funds for their projects and enables artists to give back to those who're helping them realize that sometimes flickering light at the end of the tunnel. The site requires an accompanying video presentation of your project, and users allocate increasingly tempting rewards for those who contribute to make

"You want something for your money! You at least want a copy of the finished product, but lots of people want other little pieces of the artistic process, too, or to be acknowledged for their support. One or two of my backers didn't want anything, but most people want a token—an artifact to show they are a part of something."

—ARIEL GORE, AUTHOR



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