



Artist's Statement Love Amidst Collapse

A campfire at the end of the world.

I kept that image in my head while conceptualizing and making this album: Society as we know it has utterly collapsed, and a few buddies and me are sitting around a campfire under the stars surrounded by the rubble of what was. We are tranced-out, playing some heavy tunes. It is cathartic. Beautiful. Necessary. We are creating the stories and music that will be handed down to whomever, whatever, comes next. Shakers, handclaps, tambourines, acoustic guitars, and voices cry out to the deadened world around us. Also, there is this one guy who has rigged up a car battery to an old guitar amp, and he shreds a mean solo every once in awhile.

I thought about this both literally and figuratively. In a roundabout way, the constant interconnectivity and unlimited access of our time has driven us back to the days before recorded music, when anyone who wanted to could simply go out and write a song, with virtually no barrier to entry and little concern for marketability. Now, rather than sitting around the campfire listening to Peepaw pluck his banjo, we've made our own little virtual campfires. If everything is a niche market, and no artist can be universally popular any more, is that really a bad thing? Everyone is invited to create and participate, and that's what art and music should be. Art is for all of us. By tying art to commerce, we had lost much of that spirit. But this is all the result of modern technology, and that could go away in a flash...

The songs and concepts on this album were heavily influenced by the Dark Mountain Project's manifesto, *Uncivilization*. *Uncivilization* proposes that the way of life we all know is dying, soon to be history, and that we should embrace the collapse rather than attempt to save what will inevitably fail. The overwhelming and multiple crises of our day are not a set of "problems" that can be "solved." *Uncivilization* is against the myth of progress and the myth of human centrality, and proposes we create new art and storytelling rooted in the elemental rather than in theory and ideology. The primary question being, when you give up on the failing stories you have been telling yourselves as a society, what replaces them?

Now that's some heavy shit. I don't know that I fully buy into the Dark Mountain manifesto, but I will say that nothing I've read in recent memory has gotten my attention quite like *Uncivilization*. I see evidence of what it is saying all around me, every day. I will also say that as a concept on which to base my album, it is wonderful. A lot of similar ideas had been swimming around in my head and in my songs for years, and this provided the missing framework I needed. In my song *The End of the World Dance*, I sing, "We've got to learn how to find love amidst collapse." Regardless of what our future truly holds, I am confident that is the only thing that matters.

This album is dedicated to the First People.

Aaron Semer, 2015