



### ***SAM DOORES***

“Recording in a foreign environment like Berlin, I was inspired to experiment with more cinematic, psychedelic sounds,” says Sam Doores, “but I also wanted to combine that with my love for old school New Orleans R&B and folk music. Recording this album was an opportunity to explore the space between those worlds.”

Written on-and-off over the course of several years, Doores’ captivating self-titled debut is classic and contemporary all at once, blending traditional southern roots with adventurous sonic landscapes as it reckons with heartache and loss, love and gratitude, fresh starts and, ultimately, a whole lotta change. Doores’ timeless ear for songcraft and easygoing delivery combine here to yield a sound that feels instantly familiar, full of comfort and warmth even as it breaks bold new ground. The performances are infectious in their ease, simple on the surface but built on foundations of deep emotional and harmonic complexity that belie their amiable exteriors. It’s a dynamic that Doores is quick to credit to producer Anders ‘Ormen’ Christopherson, whose chance email sparked the entire project.

“Before Hurray for the Riff Raff or The Deslondes took shape, I was in a band called Sundown Songs alongside Kiki Cavazos, Alynda Segarra, Pat Reedy, Jessie Camerdiener, and Ross Hartman,” says Doores, who’s called New Orleans home since 2006. “Anders found our music a few years later and sent me an email saying he was opening a studio in Berlin, and if I ever came through, he’d love to record together.”

As chance would have it, Doores was just about to head to Europe at the time with The Deslondes. Hailed as “burgeoning stars” by *The New York Times*, the band came together as Doores was transitioning out of Hurray for the Riff Raff, and their singular sound mixed the gritty folk and country of old Alan Lomax field recordings with the electrified soul of early Stax and Sun Records. The group’s 2014 self-titled debut was a breakout hit, praised by *NPR* as “energized, elegant and new,” and their 2017 follow-up, ‘Hurry Home,’ earned similar acclaim, with *Rolling Stone* calling it “a gritty, grimy mix of early rock ‘n’ roll and lo-fi R&B.”

“I booked myself an extra week in Berlin at the end of that Deslondes tour so I could meet Anders and check out the studio,” says Doores. “They had just finished it when I got there, which meant I was the very first session. We only did a few songs to start with, but they all felt great, so over the next few years, every time I came back through Europe on tour, I’d visit Anders and we’d record some more.”

For a prolific writer like Doores, Christopherson and his studio were a godsend. At first, he used the recording time to capture songs that didn’t quite fit The Deslondes’ vibe, but when a long-term creative and romantic relationship came to a poignant end, Doores found himself penning an avalanche of personal material that only felt right to record under his own name.

“Writing those songs was my way of moving past it all and embracing the changes happening in my life,” says Doores. “That relationship ended, and then later The Deslondes decided to go on sabbatical. Those big endings were painful, but I knew that no matter how hard it was, the experience would be a positive one in the end.”

Working in Berlin, Doores found himself collaborating with an inspiring cast of characters from all over the world. There was Christopherson, the Danish-born producer; Micah Blachman, an American guitarist who helped Anders build his studio and ended up co-producing the project; Andres Barlesi, a gifted Argentinean bassist; Carlos Santana (no, not that one), a Spanish keyboard and horn wizard; and Manon Parent, a violinist and string arranger hailing from France.

“Anders’ vision for the studio was to create a space for artists who couldn’t afford formal recording sessions,” explains Doores, “so he only works on projects he really cares about, and that’s attracted a community of musicians who share those same values. Together, they make up this wild international ‘Wrecking Crew’ of sorts.”

Most of the songs on the album began as bare-bones performance by the core band, usually featuring Doores on drums. After capturing the basic tracks on a reel-to-reel tape machine, Doores would move on to vocals next, and from there, he and Christopherson would flesh out the arrangements with a rich palette of colors and textures: sweeping strings, vintage organs, marimbas, ethereal vibraphones, and even an autoharp run through a tremolo amplifier. Once sessions in Berlin had wrapped, Doores brought the songs back to the States for stops in Nashville, where he worked with longtime friend and creative foil Andrija Tokic (Alabama Shakes, Hurray for the Ruff Raff, Benjamin Booker, Phosphorescent), and New Orleans, where he enlisted a slew of friends, neighbors, and bandmates to put their distinctive touches on the recordings.

At times calling to mind everything from Leonard Cohen to Tom Waits, the finished collection shifts effortlessly from brooding noir to joyful celebration. The dreamy “Let It Roll” takes life as it comes, while the tender “Had a Dream” makes peace with letting go, and the soulful “This Ain’t a Sad Song” finds light in the darkness. Heartache is never far from humor in Doores’ writing: he teams up with New Orleans mainstay Tuba Skinny to toast an ex on the swaggering “Wish You Well,” and he alternates verses with his old bandmate Alynda Lee Segarra on the playful “Other Side of Town,” which mixes New Orleans R&B with doo-wop gang vocals in a psychedelic blender.

“I came up with that song during carnival season,” says Doores. “I wanted to write something fun and groovy to cheer my sad, sorry ass up while the world was partying all around me.”

While much of the album works to make sense of hard times (the eerie “Solid Road,” for instance, meditates on bad luck, and the ethereal “Red Leaf Rag” grapples with violence), the collection ultimately emerges stronger and more self-assured for the journey. The slow-burning “Push On” is an ode to community and resilience in the face of adversity, while the stripped-down “Windmills” reflects on fatherhood, alcoholism, and self-worth, and surreal album closer “Nothing Like A Suburb,” originally written for Doores’ sister’s wedding, celebrates the decision to love and commit.

“In the beginning, I thought this project was just going to be a fun way to record some songs that didn’t have a home,” Doores reflects, “but in the end, it became a really important creative outlet for me during a turbulent time in my life.”

The result is an album written as much for himself as for his audience. It’s the sound of heartbreak, of self-discovery, of rebirth. It’s the sound of *Sam Doores*.