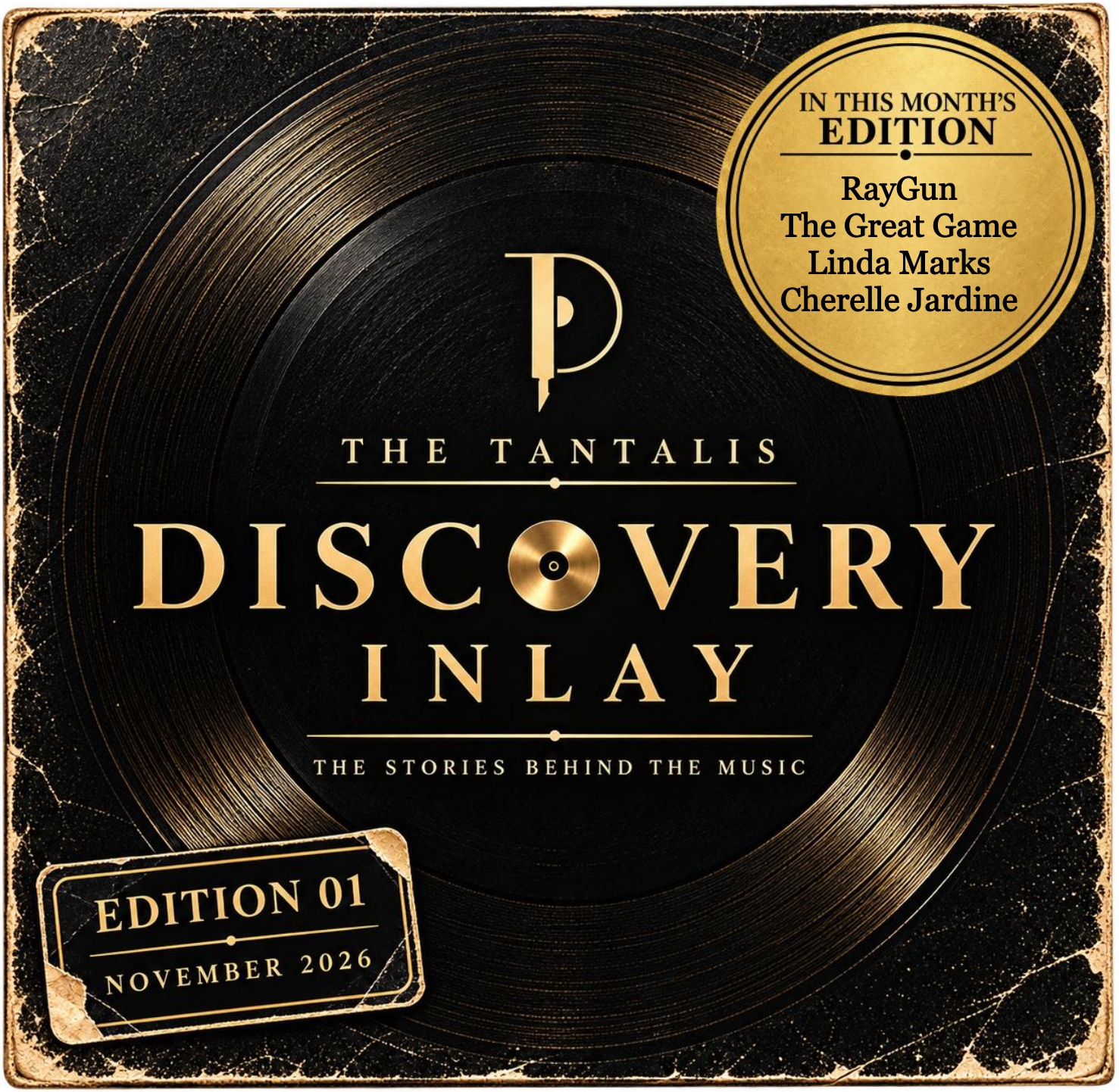

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EDITION 01
NOVEMBER 2026

THE TANTALIS

DISCOVERY INLAY

THE STORIES BEHIND THE MUSIC

Every artist has a story. Not every story has been heard.

The Tantalis Discovery Inlay is a dedicated space for the artists who make the music.

Each month we go beyond the release to explore the people, experiences and creative decisions that shape the sound.

Through in-depth interviews and original features, we celebrate the journeys, inspirations and moments that bring the music to life.

Real artists. Real stories. Real music.

THE LINER NOTES

You can build a lasting home for your latest release with the dates, credits and title. You can list your releases throughout the rest of your career, giving listeners a place to discover more about your work as your catalogue grows. Whether you enter the awards the following year or not, You'll always be a Discovery Artist and you'll always be able to list your new releases!

THE TANTALIS MUSIC AWARDS



THE TANTALIS

DISCOVERY INLAY

THE STORIES BEHIND THE MUSIC



The Rock Dog Music Foundation was created to help independent artists navigate the often confusing world of music, business, technology, and career development.
Our mission is simple: provide musicians with practical resources, education, and opportunities that help them build sustainable careers while maintaining creative independence.
Unlike many organisations, there are no membership fees and no requirement to join.
Whether you're a songwriter, performer, producer, or industry professional, we're here to support your journey.
Visitors can explore our growing Artist Resource Hub at www.RockDogArtists.org where you'll find articles, guides, industry insights, and educational resources designed specifically for today's independent music community.

We're also excited to announce that Rock Dog Radio is scheduled to launch by November 15, broadcasting 24/7 on Live365 as a completely commercial-free station dedicated to independent music, artist education, interviews, industry discussions, and special programming.
To stay connected, artists and music supporters can subscribe to our free monthly newsletter by emailing todd@rockdogartists.org.
Our next issue will be distributed on November 2 and will feature new resources, industry news, artist spotlights, and updates on our growing community.
No matter where you are in your musical journey, Rock Dog Music Foundation is here to help, encourage, and provide resources for artists around the world.

You don't have to be a member to benefit from what we provide.
If you're an independent artist looking for guidance, education, resources, or simply a supportive community, Rock Dog Music Foundation is here for you.

THE DISCOVERY INLAY





RAYGUN

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Hip-hop / Rap

Four languages. Two creative identities. One ambition: to tell stories that resonate across cultures.

01. Why did you submit to The Tantalis Music Awards?

I submitted to The Tantalis Music Awards because I believe my music deserves to be heard, recognised, and celebrated. As an independent artist, I've dedicated years to creating music that reflects my emotions, experiences, and stories. Winning an award has always been one of my dreams, and I want to prove to the world that my music is worthy of that recognition. More importantly, I hope my music can reach more people and inspire them through my stories.



THE DISCOVERY INLAY

02. You work across music, production and language. When you're creating a song, do you think first about what you want people to hear, what you want them to feel, or what you want them to understand? Can those three intentions ever pull a song in different directions?

For me, it's always UNDERSTAND - FEEL - HEAR. As a storyteller type musician, I always think about the message I want to deliver before anything else. I want people to understand my stories, connect with the emotions behind them, and finally enjoy the music itself. Of course, these three intentions can sometimes conflict. A song might sound great musically but fail to express the emotions or message I originally intended. Finding the right balance is always a challenge, but that's also what makes songwriting interesting to me. At the end of the day, I don't just want people to listen to my music. I want them to find meaning in it.

03. You have Malaysian and Chinese roots, and you work with language as both a tutor and a translator. Translation is about carrying meaning from one language into another, but some things never translate perfectly. Has that experience influenced the way you approach songwriting, particularly when you're trying to communicate a feeling that doesn't have an easy explanation?

I lived in South Korea for several years, which has greatly influenced my music, language skills, and cultural perspective. Working as a Korean language tutor and translator has taught me that not everything can be perfectly translated between languages. As a bilingual rapper, I feel equally free expressing myself in both Chinese and Korean. However, I've noticed that my writing habits, the way I structure my flow, and even how I search for words that sound good are slightly different depending on the language I'm using. Despite these differences, I believe both languages allow me to express emotions and stories with the same level of depth and sensitivity. To me, language changes the way I create, but it doesn't change the meaning I want to deliver. Even when people don't understand every word, I believe they can still connect with the emotions behind the music. After all, music itself is a universal language.

04. As a rapper and music producer, you have the ability to shape both the words and the sound surrounding them. Have you ever produced a track where the music changed the meaning of your lyrics so significantly that you began to understand your own words differently?

I wouldn't say that music has completely changed the meaning of my lyrics, because I'm usually quite certain about the message I want to deliver. My creative process often begins with production. I listen to the atmosphere of the instrumental and imagine the scenes, emotions, and stories that the music is trying to tell me. Sometimes, I start producing with a specific type beat in mind, but as I continue working on it, the music naturally develops into something completely different. When that happens, I don't force it back to my original plan. I believe there's a reason why the music turned out that way, almost as if it was meant to happen. Instead of changing the instrumental, I follow its natural flow and write lyrics that match the world and emotions it creates. If I still love my original idea, I can always explore it in another song. To me, music isn't always something I need to control. Sometimes, I just need to listen to where it's taking me.

05. Every artist has ideas that feel exciting in their head but become difficult to realise in the studio. Can you describe a creative decision you've made that seemed completely wrong at first, but ultimately took a song somewhere better than your original plan?

I've always enjoyed collaborating with other artists because I see every collaboration as a new creative assignment. Sometimes, artists approach me with musical styles that are completely outside my comfort zone. Instead of turning them down, I find it exciting to treat these opportunities as experiments and challenges. These are actually some of the most exciting and challenging moments in my creative journey. Sometimes, the results turn out even better than I imagined, while other times, they turn out to be just average. But I'm completely fine with that. What matters most to me is that every experience allows me to discover a different side of myself as an artist, sometimes even a side I never knew existed. Boom Bap has always been one of my strongest styles, but who knows? Maybe through these unexpected collaborations, I'll eventually discover another genre that I'm just as good at. To me, stepping outside my comfort zone isn't about proving that I can do everything. It's about discovering what else I'm capable of.

06. Musicians are often encouraged to develop a recognisable sound, yet artistic growth sometimes requires abandoning the very things people have come to expect from them. How do you decide when to build on what listeners already know about RAYGUN and when to risk making something that might challenge their expectations?

I believe RAYGUN has developed a recognisable identity through Boom Bap, storytelling, laid-back flows, and bilingual rap in Chinese and Korean. These are all important parts of who I am as an artist, but I never want any of them to become limitations. If I create a song in a completely different genre and genuinely love the result, I'll release it without hesitation, even if it sounds nothing like what my listeners usually expect from me. Because I believe what truly makes RAYGUN recognisable isn't just a particular sound or genre. It's the honesty in my music, the messages I deliver, and the stories that only I can tell. No matter how much my musical style changes, my experiences, emotions, and perspective will always remain uniquely mine. I want my listeners to recognise RAYGUN not just by how my music sounds, but by what my music makes them feel.

THE DISCOVERY INLAY

07. You also run R.G. Music Studio. When you're working on music in your own creative environment, how do you protect the freedom to experiment from the pressure to produce something finished, polished and ready for release?
When it comes to running my studio, I usually prioritise my clients' music slightly more than my own, because I believe it's my responsibility to deliver something they're truly satisfied with. When working with clients, I always try my best to follow their vision and requirements. To me, being able to bring someone else's musical ideas to life is also a reflection of my abilities as a producer. Of course, if I strongly believe that one of my ideas could work better, I'll share it with them and try to demonstrate why. Once I've completed my clients' projects, I can finally focus on my own music. I actually have a lot of unfinished songs and demos waiting to be completed. Whenever I have free time, I try to work through them one by one, turning those ideas into finished songs that I can eventually release. I know there are people waiting to hear my new music, and that's one of the biggest motivations for me to keep creating. For me, creative freedom and responsibility don't have to compete. It's about knowing when to prioritise someone else's vision and when to give myself the space to explore my own.

08. Your fourth album, TIME, suggests a subject that every artist eventually has to confront: how we change, what we hold on to and what we leave behind. When you look across your own musical journey, is there something you used to believe about yourself as an artist that time has proved wrong?
I used to believe that I had all the time in the world. When I first started making music ten years ago, I thought that as long as I worked hard enough, I would eventually prove myself before I got too old. But as time passes, I've started to feel a little afraid. Looking back, I know I've already achieved quite a lot, and I'm proud of how far I've come. But at the same time, there are still so many songs I want to create, so many stages I dream of performing on, and so many awards I hope to win. Sometimes, I'm afraid that I simply won't have enough time to achieve everything I dream of. However, there's one thing that time has never changed. Ten years ago, I wanted to become a musician who tells his own stories through music, hoping those stories could touch people's hearts and help them through difficult times. And ten years later, that dream remains exactly the same. I guess time has changed the way I see my journey, but it has never changed the reason why I started. Maybe that's what my fourth album, TIME, truly means to me.

09. Imagine a listener discovers your music years from now, listens to several releases and forms a strong opinion about the person behind them. What is one thing you think they might misunderstand about you from your music alone—and would you want the opportunity to correct that impression?
Honestly, I don't think there's much for listeners to misunderstand about me through my music, because everything I write comes from a place of honesty. My lyrics often reflect my real experiences, emotions, and the way I see the world. If someone thinks I'm a lonely or melancholic person after listening to my songs, they might not be entirely wrong. Those feelings are genuinely part of who I am. I've never tried to create a different version of myself through music. The stories I tell are reflections of my life and my thoughts. And even if someone does misunderstand me, I don't think I would feel the need to correct them. Because ultimately, being understood as a person isn't my biggest priority. What matters more to me is whether listeners can find their own stories within mine. I don't write music just to make people understand me. I write music hoping that, through my stories, someone out there might feel a little more understood.

10. THE LAST TRACK: Imagine you could leave one final recording behind that would be heard by someone who has never met you, doesn't speak every language you speak and knows nothing about your background. You can't explain the lyrics or tell them what the music means. What would you want that person to feel or understand when the recording ends—and why would that be the message you chose to leave behind?
If I could leave one final recording behind, I would want the listener to feel two things: that someone understands their pain, and that they still have the courage to keep going. I've always believed that music has the power to connect people beyond language. Even if someone doesn't understand a single word of my lyrics, I hope they can still feel the emotions and sincerity behind my voice and melodies. Throughout my musical journey, I've always wanted to become a storyteller who could touch people's hearts through my own experiences. I know what it feels like to be lonely, to struggle, and to question yourself. And I believe there are many people out there who have experienced those same feelings. If my final song could make even one person feel a little less alone, and give them a little more strength to face tomorrow, that would mean everything to me. I wouldn't need them to remember my name or know my story. I would simply want them to know that their pain is understood, and that their story is still worth continuing. Because in the end, I don't just want my music to tell my story. I want it to give someone else the courage to continue theirs.


THE
DISCOVERY INLAY
01. Why did you submit to The Tantalis Music Awards?
First of all, thank you for the profound and thought provoking questions!
We appreciate very much the sincere effort you're making to provide a meaningful insight into the artist's work.
This also answers the first question, besides us feeling ready to present our music to competitors and awards; I had the feeling that this platform is professional and sincere, so I took the shot.
SIDE A
33⅓ RPM
The Great Game
Taipei City, Taiwan | Independent Music
Three countries. Secret jam sessions. One shared passion for making music.

THE DISCOVERY INLAY

02. Your trio brings together piano, drums and percussion, with bass and trombone, under the description of "symphonic trio jazz". What does that phrase mean to you musically, and what can this combination of instruments express that a conventional jazz trio might struggle to capture?
I have a typical German classical upbringing and I have been indulging in all kinds of orchestral works, particularly late romanticism. I also perceive the piano as a very symphonic instrument that is capable of catching the full range of musical expression, once the imagination is asking for it.
In my opinion that's not very typical in the jazz context, where the piano often is perceived 'only' as part of the rhythm group.

03. Your album Sure As the Sun Will Rise is described as a journey through beauty, dreams, struggle and the human condition, ultimately arriving at joy. When you create music that moves through such contrasting emotions, do you begin with a destination in mind, or must the music discover its own way through the darkness?
I must admit that I never go to the piano with the intent of writing music and only occasionally to express my immediate thoughts and feelings.
Mostly I just want to enjoy playing and then it happens that I start to look for certain beauty and then expressions and aesthetics emerge that satisfy my heart and automatically it moves into melancholy and drama and the compositions form itself.
Only then I start to interpret and think about the meaning. Pretty close to self therapy I guess.

04. You have made a wide dynamic range central to The Great Game's musical identity. What fascinates you about the relationship between extreme delicacy and overwhelming intensity, and how do you know when a musical moment needs more power versus when the greatest impact comes from holding something back?
This again is rooted in my love for orchestral works, particularly Mahler and R.Strauss's Orchesterlieder. And of course often the feeling for dynamic development derives from experience. There's a need for natural dramaturgy in all complex creations.

05.The chemistry of a trio depends on musicians listening and responding to one another in real time. Can you describe a performance when one musician's unexpected choice fundamentally changed what the others played? What happened in that moment, and did it reveal something about the group that rehearsal alone could never have taught you?
This is my favourite question and it's also my ideal expectation for any performance.
I think of it as the central element if creativity in any formation, not only in jazz. It's exactly the one thing that keeps the musical soul alert and fresh. Luckily I experienced it countless times, even at recordings and also in our actual album. It requires experienced and confident musicians and when it happens it's the ultimate reward and absolute satisfaction.
It can happen in rehearsals but usually occurs in performances, because the level of attention is much higher.

THE DISCOVERY INLAY

06. Your sound draws on European romanticism, Scandinavian jazz and Afro-Latin rhythms. These musical traditions emerged from different histories and expressive worlds. When you bring them together, how do you distinguish between borrowing a musical language you admire and genuinely transforming it into something that reflects your own collective identity?
I think musical language doesn't even need to be borrowed. It's a natural process that happens when you follow your musical desires and intuitions. I have never spent much time into analysing and studying music but I spent extensive hours listening to music that touches me and inspires me. Then parts of the language found their way into my writing naturally.
For me the use of harmonic language that would probably be considered romanticism, impressionism and expressionism, and combining it with Latin American and African rhythms was the most gratifying and inspiring way of expressing myself.
However I think this process is as individual and personal as it gets and every artist has their unique path.

07. Your album moves through titles such as Ad Astra, Quo Vadis, Es Ist Ein Schnitter and El Buen Camino—references that suggest journeys, questions about direction and reflections on mortality. How important are these ideas to the music itself? If a listener never read the titles or album description, what might they understand differently about the emotional journey you have created?
I also like this questions a lot. Because it touches a very profound element of musical communication. Honestly, I would prefer not providing any names or explanations for my music. Because listeners that sincerely dive into the experience will ultimately make up their own story, and yes, I had people come up with interpretations I never even would have imagined.

08. Instrumental music leaves listeners free to create their own stories, but that freedom also means they may hear something completely different from what the musicians intended. Has a listener ever interpreted one of your compositions in a way that challenged your own understanding of it? Did their interpretation change how you felt about the piece?
I think listening and experiencing music is as individually distinct as writing it. On the other hand many people prefer to be guided and inspired by explanations and fixed ideas. It can as well provide means of communication and understanding between artists and audiences. However I sometimes wish audiences were more adventurous in discovering music through their own mind.

09. When a group develops a shared musical identity, each musician inevitably influences the others. Since forming The Great Game, what has another member of the trio taught you—deliberately or unintentionally—that has changed the way you approach your own instrument or your understanding of music?
Yes, that's a very important aspect of artistic development. Every determined musician is a source of inspiration and learning, especially when there's a connection over years. Very often I have been confronted with skills that I myself have neglected and then needed to catch up and align. In The Great Game it was Brandon's melodious and elegant improvisations that inspired me to express myself less through virtuosity (typically classical), but through more thoughtful and engaging lines.

10. THE LAST TRACK - Imagine The Great Game performs one final piece together, and the audience is asked to listen without knowing the musicians' names, backgrounds or intentions. When the last note fades, what would you hope those listeners had experienced or understood about the human condition—and would it matter to you if every listener took away something different?
I would love if every listener would have understood exactly the aspect of the music that touches their heart and gives them pleasure. Even when they knew all the information and backgrounds and titles, I believe that deep inside every human being resonates with the very elements of the music that moves the part of their soul that truly matters to them.



THE DISCOVERY INLAY



01. Why did you submit to The Tantalis Music Awards?

I liked your focus on artistry, and what seemed like a deeper look at the craft an artist brings to their songwriting. Care to look at my creative vision and the emotional impact of my work matters to me. I also know that you and Sam are substantive people and artists, and what you would create would be high quality.

Linda Marks

Waltham, Massachusetts, USA

Contemporary Folk/ Singer-Songwriter

Music from the heart, shaped by a lifetime of exploring what connects us.



THE DISCOVERY INLAY

02. You began writing songs as a child, released your first album in 1983, and later stepped away from music for a substantial period before returning to recording and performing. When you look back at the person who wrote those early songs, what would surprise her most about the artist you have become?

My reason for stepping away was two-fold: I was very very young when I released my first album, and it was painful to be as public and exposed as performance asked of me as a shy introvert, especially with the crushing voice of my father in my head from countless choruses of his scared, angry message, "music is a waste of a good mind." That tore me apart. Secondly, I ended up raising my son as a single mom with no child support, and caring for my mom with Alzheimer's. I was in the middle of a really tough intergenerational sandwich that did not allow me to be able to follow my deepest passion for several decades. If I look back at the person who wrote my early songs, what would surprise her most is both how long it took for me to do the healing work to allow me to fully embrace my calling as as songwriter. That part is really sad. And I think she would be surprised at the courage and strength I developed to make a 1000% commitment to my craft and devote myself to songwriting and recording over the past 15 years. I think she would be proud of what I have done, including having a 17th album due out in March 2027, being a Voting Member of the Recording Academy, and this year, after so many years of work, being nominated for a New England Music Award for Best Roots Act. Getting awards and nominations that are based solely on the quality of my music and the devotion to my craft would make the younger me cry because her full vision has become real.

03. Your music often explores difficult subjects, including domestic violence, grief, mental health and social injustice. When you write about suffering, how do you balance the responsibility of representing painful realities honestly with your desire to leave listeners feeling that hope and change are still possible?

I have been told by countless listeners that my songs are uplifting and bring hope when I write and sing songs about the painful realities of life. I keep things very real emotionally, and write with great compassion. I step inside the hearts, minds and experiences of the characters I write about, with a desire to tell their stories authentically, and in a human relatable way. I have stepped into the hearts and minds of children, of men, of public figures (like Luigi Mangione)—people are clearly different from me. Yet, my heart can look deeply at their journeys, struggles and experiences, and really seek to understand what it is like to be in their shoes—their deeper thoughts and feelings. Two of my most recent songs along these lines, one about estrangement called "Silence" and one that delves inside the challenges many men I have know face when involved in a relationship that brings real intimacy called "Locking The Door To My Heart," have evoked incredibly positive responses from listeners in my shows. The feedback is that I really touched something deep inside of them in a very poignant way.

04. Your background combines songwriting with decades of work as a psychotherapist and life coach. Has your professional understanding of human behaviour ever made writing a song more difficult, because you could see too many sides of a situation, rather than making the emotional choice that the song demanded?

Actually no. I write very intuitively and write from the heart. So, I usually have a very good feel for what I want to express through a song. I follow that intuitive direction and let it guide me. Once I've sketched out what I feel is true to the purpose of the song, I may refine it with my thoughts. But that is the second level. As a song evolves, I want to be sure it stays true to the initial feel/vision/message.

05. Your Sanctuary project brought together a global network of musicians and incorporated the words of domestic violence survivors. What changed when the people whose experiences inspired the work were able to contribute their own voices, and what did that teach you about the difference between speaking for people and creating space for them to speak?

I never like to speak FOR people. I like to capture the voices of people so that I am more of a conduit for their stories than speaking for them. I listen to the emotional and spiritual tone and feel, as well as the words. I try to stay true to the heart of the story. When I listened to and read the words of domestic violence survivors, it made the song and its message more relatable and real.

I am used to creating space for people to speak in my therapy practice, so it is pretty natural to do so. A side note: In the process of doing the Sanctuary Project, I become more conscious of how I grew up in a home where domestic violence was present, and that I myself was a survivor., as was my mother. At one level I had never fully embraced that truth until I did the Sanctuary Project. That was very powerful.

06. After returning to music following a multi-decade hiatus, you built an extensive catalogue of albums and developed a strong community around your work. Did returning to songwriting feel like reclaiming a part of yourself that had been waiting, or did you discover that the person who came back to music was fundamentally different from the person who had left it?

I think I addressed some of this in one of the earlier questions. But short story". I was definitely reclaiming a part of myself that I had not been able to express for too many years. Being able to return to my greatest passion, and my most innate language, music and songwriting was a homecoming. I was so grateful to return and made a commitment to myself that I would never let it go. Music and songwriting has been at the centre of my life since I returned, and will remain at the centre. The one thing that changes with time is we learn, grow and become more masterful at our craft. So, that is reflected in my songwriting.

THE DISCOVERY INLAY

07. You've written songs responding to specific events and social issues, from the Uvalde school shooting to the Los Angeles wildfires explored in Queen of the Angels. How do you decide when a story is asking you to write a song, and how do you know when the emotional distance needed to do it justice has not yet been reached?

I feel like certain issues and events choose me. They grab at my gut and pull at my heart strings. Regarding the Uvalde school shooting, sadly with the proliferation of gun violence incidents that have been only growing over the past 10 years, I have written many songs regarding the gun violence epidemic. And I have also written quite a few songs about what it is like to be a child growing up in today's challenging world. Uvalde grabbed in both the heart and gut because not only was it another gun violence incident, but it impacted children. So, it was quite natural envisioning/hearing the voices of children singing "please don't leave me flowers at my grave" in response to the heartbreaking and unthinkable tragedy that took place at Uvalde. It was natural to envision/hearing "Our Children's Prayer." In terms of Queen Of The Angels, there was a personal thread underneath the inspiration. I had planned to be at the Grammys and had bought my plane ticket, my Grammys ticket and had my hotel reservation prior to the outbreak of the LA Wildfires. I was looking forward to Grammy weekend. The wildfires changed all that. I had early COVID and lost my voice entirely from November 2019 until January 2020. It took 5 years of work with my vocal coach to heal my voice and recover its quality and stamina. I could not risk exposing myself to all the toxins in the air with the wildfires still burning. So, Grammy weekend, I spent time researching the history of Los Angeles and fires, and learned about the Tongva people who inhabited the land now known as Los Angeles prior to the arrival of the Spanish. And the Tongva name for what is now Los Angeles meant "valley of smoke." Since Los Angeles means "the angels," I imagined a "queen of the angels" looking over the land, and weeping as the wildfires decimated whatever was in its path. And the song followed. In terms of the emotional distance to do a song justice, I think that is another intuitive dimension. I don't analyse closeness or distance. I just feel it out.

08. You have worked across folk, jazz, pop, Broadway, gospel and Latin styles. When a song begins to take shape, how do you recognise the musical language it needs? Have you ever discovered that the genre you initially imagined was actually preventing the song from becoming what it needed to be?

Songs are like children. Each one is unique and has its own pathway. Songs first come to me as "song seeds," which can be an idea, a phrase, a story, a current event, a musical fragment. And I try to capture that song seed by writing it down or singing it into my phone. Then I try to give it my attention and care to see how it wants to grow and what it wants to grow into. I never have a pre-conception of what the song is going to be or the genre it is going to be. That is why it has been so hard for my entire life to find a natural home in one genre pocket. The genre emerges from the growth of the song, rather than me trying to write a song to fit a particular genre box. I am grateful for the Contemporary Folk genre, because it is really a crossover genre. Because I write a lot of stories and social impact songs, I tend to fit in this genre whether I write folk pop, folk rock, folk gospel, folk Americana, folk jazz, etc.

09. Your work frequently returns to the idea that music can create connection between people who might otherwise never understand one another. Having spent years writing about both deeply personal experiences and universal concerns, is there something about human nature that you once believed but no longer do—and could a song ever have changed your mind?

I have always found music to be a deep, universal language that reaches deeper than words and connects people heart to heart. I have seen and felt the way music takes a room of strangers and turns it into a room of community of the heart both as a performer and an audience member. That lives deep inside of me. When I write anthemic social impact songs, I try to craft them so that a group of people can sing along, and feel our human connection that way. But even fun songs, like "The Turkey Social Dance," which people LOVE, and always makes the audience smile and laugh, builds community in a room. I believe music can help us connect to our deepest human nature, even in today's world where so much of what I considered human nature is getting challenged. Today, it is easy to lose sight of and connection with our fundamental humanness with the proliferation of technology and AI infiltrating human relationships and even music. We need human created, human arranged and human performed music all the more! Songs that touch my heart always make a lasting difference for me.

10. THE LAST TRACK: Imagine you could leave one song behind for someone who feels unseen, unheard or convinced that their story doesn't matter. You would never know whether they heard it, and they would never know who wrote it. What would you want that song to give them, and what would you hope they finally understood about themselves?

I think different people might be touched by different songs. I have already seen that as I have shared songs from my catalogue over the years. Of current songs, "You're Not Alone" on my Queen Of The Angels album evokes a strong emotional response in many listeners. It gives hope. It validates their yearning for soul deep lasting love. It makes them feel seen and heard and understood. It makes them feel not alone. On the other hand, a never song of mine that I mentioned earlier, "Silence," which is about estrangement, has proved to touch many hearts and address a topic few talk about I a very relatable way. The song I wrote about my mother's Alzheimer's journey, "The Gardener" from a much earlier album, has ouched not only people who have had a loved one go on the Alzheimer's journey, but also others who have had loved ones go through related journeys that have whittled away much of their personalities or abilities, health or both. If my songs can touch, heal and open people to their own hearts, bring tears of recognition, connection and healing, and validate their human experience, I will feel very grateful. If someone can feel more human and at peace with their humanness, I will feel like I have contributed something of value. If a person has felt too closed down and broken to have vision or hope, and one of my songs has helped them feel safer and able to have even a glimmer of vision or hope, I will feel like I have made a difference.

THE DISCOVERY INLAY



Cherelle Jardine

Richmond, British Columbia, Canada

Singer-songwriter / Rock

From mops and mixing desks to rediscovered recordings, a lifetime of music made with heart.

01. Why did you submit to The Tantalis Music Awards?

As an independent artist, I'm always looking for opportunities to bring my music to new listeners and connect with other people who care about music. I want to give my new album as many chances to be heard as possible. Tantalis is brand new, and I liked the idea of being involved at the beginning. I know how much work it takes to bring an idea to life, so I appreciate people who are willing to build something that creates opportunities for artists. Recognition is lovely, of course, but so are the relationships and unexpected connections that can come from putting yourself out there.



THE DISCOVERY INLAY

02. What did your difficult beginning give you as an artist?
It taught me to be resourceful and to keep going without waiting for perfect circumstances. I left home at sixteen, taught myself guitar on a broken instrument rescued from the garbage, and traded janitorial work for my first recording sessions. Music was something I felt compelled to do, so I found whatever way I could to make it happen. I wouldn't romanticise those difficulties, but they taught me how much I was willing to work for something I loved. They also gave me an appreciation for every person who offered an opportunity or believed in me. I still carry that gratitude. I know what it feels like to have something to say and very few resources to help you say it.

03. Are your different musical identities different parts of you, or different expressions of the same person?
I think they're different parts of the same person, coming forward at different times. HEAD, where I performed as Lyric, gave me room to explore some very personal and difficult subjects through electro-rock. With Stone Poets, Marc, Scott and I write songs that explore what it means to be human—the struggles, the love and the experiences that connect us. Peacenik Collective is all about peace, love and harmony. My happy place! My solo work gives me the freedom to follow a song wherever it wants to go. I've never felt comfortable confining myself to one genre. There's room in me for anger, tenderness, grief, humour, peace, love and hope. The optimism in my recent music comes from seeing the beauty in the world and in people and believing that music gives me a way to celebrate it, bring us together and make love louder.

04. How do you decide which emotions still need a voice and which parts of your past you no longer want to give power to?
I try to listen to what I'm feeling now. Something that once came out as anger might, years later, become a song about grief, understanding or finding the strength to move forward. I don't have to approach an experience from the same place every time. I also don't owe every painful memory a song. There are things I can acknowledge without continuing to revisit them publicly. My childhood was very difficult and I let Lyric take care of that end of things! When I do write about difficult subjects, I want there to be a reason beyond describing what happened. Perhaps there's something I still need to express, or something that might help another person feel less alone. I can't change my beginning, but I do have a say in what I create from it. These days it's about creating music that helps promote peace, love and bridge the great divide as it's much needed in these troubled times.

05. What was it like to give the title track its new life, and did that change your understanding of making a recording your own?
"Something Old, Something New" was written by Marc Gladstone, Chris Murray Driver, Jay Wittur, the late Elio Martinelle and the late Doug Bennett from Doug and the Slugs. Having a previously unrecorded song with that history become the title track and album name, felt very special and made perfect sense as the album is a conversation between different chapters of my life, the artist I was, the artist I am now and the things I still want to say. Marc is my husband, so there's a personal connection, too. It brought another chapter of his musical life into this album. Making a song "my own means" finding an honest connection to it while respecting the people who created it. That feeling runs through the album. Recovering "Let's Spend the Night Together" from an old two-inch tape meant hearing my late best friend Rachel Page's harmonies again. Those voices and histories belong in these recordings. Being able to carry them forward is part of what makes the album so meaningful to me.

06. How do you call for change without making people feel attacked?
I try to begin with something we can recognise in one another: the need to feel safe, to be loved and to have a future for the people we care about. That gives me somewhere human to begin, even when the subject is difficult. But we all need and want love right? With Lay the Weapons Down" and "Love's Gotta Get Louder," on the new album, I want to be clear about what I believe while still inviting people into the song. There can be strength and urgency in a message of compassion. My hope is that someone feels moved to consider what they can do, rather than feeling there's no place for them in the conversation. That's also why I created the Love's Gotta Get Louder Community Challenge. It invites people to share what they're doing to make love louder. One person's act of kindness might inspire someone else to act, and that's how a song's message can carry into everyday life.

THE DISCOVERY INLAY

07. Can you recall a particular Hand Over Heart moment that showed how much music can hold for someone?

Hand Over Heart began with Marc's mom. She was living in a retirement home and had always wanted us to perform for her. We're so grateful we had the chance to do that before she passed away. A few months later, her retirement home called and invited us back to perform. Other managers began hearing about us and booking us, and we now regularly perform at 16 different retirement homes. One moment that has stayed with me was when a woman who had recently lost her husband told us how much comfort our performance had brought her. To know that our music had offered her some peace during such a painful time meant so much to us. After every show, people tell us how the songs take them back to their youth, and they often share the memories those songs bring with them. We get to learn a little about their lives through the music they love. That connection fills our hearts with joy. Even on days when I'm feeling down before a Hand Over Heart performance, I always leave feeling uplifted. The joy and connection we share with our audiences give so much back to us. Performing as Hand Over Heart makes me think about all the memories an audience brings into a room. A song can be connected to a first dance, a friendship, a loved one or an entire chapter of someone's life. Marc and I might be playing the music, but its meaning belongs to each person listening. That's something I want to approach with care and respect.

08. What have you learned from creating opportunities for other artists?

I've learned how much good work depends on someone making room for it. Writing and recording a song takes commitment, but so does organising a concert, giving an artist airtime or helping their work reach an audience. Through the Pacific Songwriters Association, Make a Scene Canada and Musical Expressions, I've had opportunities to support that part of the process. As an artist myself, I understand how much a thoughtful interview or a chance to perform can mean. Sometimes someone has been working quietly for years, and an opportunity helps more people hear what they have to offer. Those experiences have made me more appreciative of the people working behind the scenes. A music community grows because people put time and care into one another's work.

09. What creative risk excites you most at this stage of your career?

Putting out a solo album after a solo hiatus for a few decades both excites and terrifies me at the same time. Something Old, Something New is my first solo album since 2006, but I've continued creating through other projects throughout those years. Returning to solo recording means bringing everything I've learned back into a project with my name on it. An older recording can hold an idea that still deserves to be heard. Revisiting it gives me the chance to hear what's valuable and discover what I can bring to it now. New material asks me to trust myself in a different way. At this stage, I'm excited by anything that makes me feel curious and a little nervous. Making a mini-documentary about the album has been part of that, too, I'll be releasing it on November 1st along with my next single off the album, Love's Gotta Get Louder. After fourteen albums across my solo work and bands, I still want to learn, surprise myself and make something that matters to me.

10. THE LAST TRACK: What would you want someone discovering your music decades from now to recognise?

I'd want them to hear someone who felt things deeply and kept reaching for connection. They wouldn't need to know every detail of my life. I'd hope the honesty in my voice and the songs would tell them enough. There's pain in some of my music, but there's also love, friendship, joy and the belief that we can leave the world a little kinder than we found it. I would want that person to hear that a difficult beginning doesn't take away your ability to create something beautiful or offer something generous. And if they were going through something difficult themselves, I'd hope a song could keep them company. Decades later, being able to give someone that feeling would mean a great deal to me.

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