

## ALIEN CITY REMASTERED!



Mental Patient/ Alien City composer

After emerging from a mental hospital in 1978 we began recording a huge song cycle I wrote called Alien City. There were four parts to it with each part about 30 minutes long. It was filled with angst, cynicism, mysticism and social surrealism. The songs became very science fiction oriented especially in parts 3 and 4, where a young man discovers that the sun is not hot, but cool, and he abandons the earth to live inside of it, charging himself up with spiritual solar energy, while killer fogs turn people into spiritual amnesiacs. A boy takes off his clothes and runs with a pack of dogs, against the wishes of the city fathers. A young man finds the courage to leave the underground fallout shelters and venture to the top of the world, despite what all the doctors tell him. People everywhere are sleepwalking their lives away. Cultural heroes are mummified and they charge you to go inside and see their remains.

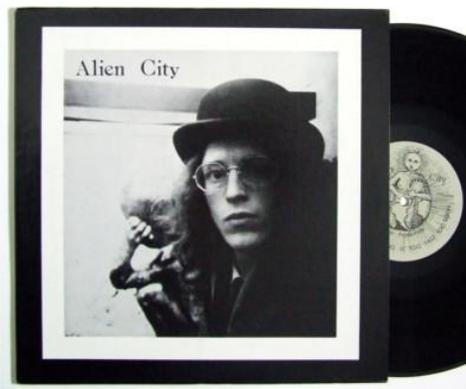
Alien City parts one and two begin more plaintively, with a rejection of society's standards and mores, especially the programming one receives from television, and there is a yearning for ancient mystical truths which culminates in the raw wildness of 'Information Overdose' and in Part 2, bizarre conspiracies and an upside-down world are described, and it ends with the road song, Dirty Heaven, where "the freeway lights go by, but it takes the speed of light to die!" and finally the singer sees entropy in his lover's eyes.



**Original Photo Shoot for the vinyl lp- featuring local legend Stan Iverson and his daughter, among others. The misfits are leaving the Alien City!**

The recording sessions were a lot of fun. I recruited guest stars from the Seattle Scene, such as Rich Riggins, the smoking guitarist from Chinas Comidas, and his amazing poetess girlfriend Cynthia Genser who belted out my lyrics about the bizarre conspiracy. We brought in Peter Barnes from The Enemy, and he did a few drum tracks, one of which was too long to fit onto this one CD. I also brought in my pal Al Sharp, the bass-player for Gary Minkler's group Red Dress.

Parts one and two were recorded and developed, and the one mix we pulled I considered to be a rough draft, and I was busy making notes on what to change. For instance the vocals were way outside, and they covered up the bass and drums. Unfortunately, the original master tapes were all destroyed, including the three bed tracks we had laid down for part three. Only a cassette dub of one song remains.



Depressed and suicidal, I moved from the city up into the Skagit Valley and began working on new projects with my poet friend Asher Cohen.

Dale 'Paco' Cummings, my musical associate who sang, played bass and guitars on parts one and two, decided to print a vinyl record of the work using the only existing mix, the one I didn't like! He sacrificed his savings by ordering and paying for a thousand copies, and we stored them at a friend's house. Then he joined me in Skagit Valley to work on new material concerning time & memory. Unbeknownst to us, our friend died suddenly of pancreatic cancer, and all of the records were stolen.



Strongbow and Paco rehearsing new material in Skagit Valley

Again, depression and darkness filled my life. For the next ten years, Alien City records turned up in used record stores on the University Avenue. We never made any money from it, and Paco lost his entire investment, and it caused us nothing but pain, pain, pain. However, over the years the album became some sort of collector's item, and people would tell me how great it was. The praise fell on deaf ears, as I had steeled myself and moved on. But many of the themes and compositions from the project, which I called the 'Alien City Suite', kept appearing in my new repertoire.

In the late 80's and early 90's I was performing new songs at Red Sky Poetry Theater, accompanying myself on acoustic guitar. One day two beautiful girls sat down at the bar next to me and asked me if I was the singer from Alien City. It turns out they were huge fans of the album. I started hanging out with these girls and eventually sat down at a piano and recorded parts 3 and 4 for them, which they seemed quite deliriously happy about. They seemed especially delighted by the fact that they were the first people to actually hear it in its entirety, and now they owned a special home-recorded cassette tape of it.

About ten years after the release of the original vinyl, I brought together one of my bands and taught them versions of two of the songs from the never before heard Parts 3 and 4, and those two songs are included in the extra tracks on the new cd release. Sleepwalking 'All of Your Life' was from Part 3, while 'Sleepy Sleepwalker' was the final song on Part 4. These two feature Robin Crestman on drums and her then-husband Jeff on bass. The shorter instrumentals: 'Inside the Sun' from Part 3 and 'Waltz at the End of the World' from Part 4 were completed in 1994 on Camano Island by Patrick Donicht. These feature Scott Severson on drums, along with Patrick Donicht. The longer instrumental 'Inside the Alien City' was initially recorded in Seattle and finished on Camano Island with the tag ending lyrics from one of the last songs on Part 4. This featured Patrick's friend Doug on wahwah guitar, just before he passed away.

There was talk about a remastered release of Alien City as a double vinyl album about 5 years ago, but the backers pulled out when we learned the original album had been bootlegged in Europe! I felt like the project had screwed me again! When the legendary Seattle musical genius Steve Turnidge finally got a good copy of the album, he used that as a source to remaster it, removing the surface noise from the cheap vinyl press that was used, enhancing the low end and the overall volume, and in short, making it sound spectacular. So then, with the help of Tom Dyer and Green Monkey, we offer this new remastered version, including more than 18 minutes of extra bonus material.



Another shot from the 1979 album shoot. The two girls behind me are the two vocalists on the original album: Brenda Scallon and Jennifer Downs. The girl on the right is Stan Iverson's daughter!

For those who are interested I will now offer the libretto for some of my favorite pieces from Part 3 and 4. I kicked off part 3 (When Everything is All Right) with an experimental ditty that had three strange chords, a C, an A and an E.

“Once a pack of stray dogs got loose in the city.  
They ate a lot of newspapers  
pooped a lot of newsprint on the lawn.  
A band of City Fathers with their guns got out of bed at dawn.  
They must stop this pack of roving dogs. They must stop this gang of killer dogs.”

When I saw them leaving, I got on my knees and prayed.  
I thought about those dogs and the great mistake they made.  
Coming into the city,  
of ever coming to the town.

Then a dog pressed its face against my window  
and when I looked into its eyes,  
I saw my own reflection.  
That’s when I took off all my clothes and started running with the dogs.  
I know places to hide where no one can find us.

My family and friends all think that I’m a big disgrace.  
They curse me every time they see my doggies licking my face, and hands.  
My face and hands.

Now they’ve offered me ten thousand dollars if I’ll only lead them to the pack.  
But I have no use for their blood money and I sit here calmly waiting for the crack  
of dawn. Dawn with the Dogs. Dawn with the Dogs, in the city.”

The beds for this song were recorded, but then the masters were destroyed.  
Another favorite song from Part Three was about the killer fogs.

When those killer fogs come rolling in at night  
That’s when I need you next to me to hold me tight  
But when those fogs come rolling down, you get into your little car and drive downtown  
It happens every day, I watch your wheels as they  
spin round and round, round and round they go...  
When those killer fogs come down upon us from the sky  
And the man on the TV says “You’re all gonna die!”  
You do your little smile, pull your cigarette and say to me, “Somebody somewhere honey, is making lots of  
money, and it ain’t me. No it’s not me!”  
Honey I cannot stand to listen to your jive any more,  
I hate your Waikiki tan and I doubt that you’ll survive the war...  
Oh no, you’re not gonna make it through it. What I mean to say is that you’re going to stick right to it!  
You’re not gonna make it  
through the killer fogs.  
You’re not gonna make it, oh no not at all.

I ask you why I break myself into little pieces over you. I love you but I know I’ll never get through to you.  
Your letter says you’ve gone back east; you’re going to make a million bucks. You don’t expect an answer.  
So I write and say Good Luck! That’s all I say Good Luck to you!  
You know I’ve got six hundred of your pictures up on my wall. But lately when I look at them, I can’t see you at  
all. Through all these fogs.  
Oh no, you’re not gonna make it through I’m telling you,  
Your face may be in all the magazines but that doesn’t means a thing to me,  
all this talk about careers I just can’t hear you anymore,  
the world is ending you’re still trying to open up the door to sweet success  
I must confess it doesn’t matter anymore, not it does not matter, at all.  
Nothing matters when you’re lost inside of a fog.

One of the best pieces from Part 3 was called 'At a Downtown Building' ...

Oh the air is cold your breath drops frozen to the ground and it will freeze up both your lungs,  
at least that's what the doctors found but I don't hear them any more. I don't listen any more!  
I'm not afraid to die, I just can't stand livin' down here!  
So I leave the fallout shelter and I breathe the air.  
I take off my gas mask and I breathe the air. I breathe the air!

Oh, the winter sun, it looks so bright I stood and stared at it with both my eyes.  
Its funny cause the doctors said I would go blind, but they were wrong.  
Because it did not hurt me!  
It didn't hurt my eyes at all!  
No it did not hurt me! It didn't hurt my eyes at all...no not at all.

Everything is old and broken  
I collect old Metro tokens,  
Suddenly a girl is by my side.  
The doctors said I shouldn't touch her, but then they are not up here with us,  
All their talk about fallout was a lie!  
Contamination is only in the mind!  
We're a new mutation! My lover and I!

At a downtown building I just watch you ride the escalators  
Going up and now you're coming down.  
Right now all the streets are empty,  
Only you and I are moving, cause everyone's still living underground!  
At a downtown building, we're standing all alone!  
In an empty building, we're finally on our own! Finally on our own!

And then this lively little gem, which is one of the bonus tracks on the album:

Somnabulistic woman!  
What were you doing late last night?  
Sleepwalking in the streets again, weren't you!  
I caught you in the traffic light.  
You were out walking  
In flannel pajamas  
You don't listen to a word I say.  
You just keep walking, so I just keep talking,  
Out on the streets in people's way!  
People bump against you in the morning.  
They laugh and they point at your crayolla eyes.  
You been in the streets for such a long time  
You've forgotten how to cry!  
You should be living  
Out in the country  
Where you know that sleeping ain't a sin  
But here in the city, you looking so pretty  
But I betcha don't remember where you been  
Because you're sleepwalking  
All of your life!  
Sleepwalking, all of your life...

You know you're sleepin  
You know you're dreamin  
Just watching your life passing you by!  
And here I am am waiting for you to wake up,  
But I don't think yer gonna try  
Because you're sleepwalking all of your life.  
All of your life. Yes you are.

And finally, there is the song I struggled with for a long time, trying to get the rhythm right. I had constructed it in such a quirky way!

I know that you can hear, I know that you can hear me speaking to you.  
I know that you can see, but I know you only see what you want to see. What do you want to see, my darling?  
Can you survive a collision at the speed of sound? Can you survive a collision at the speed of light?  
Can you survive a collision of mind?

“I know that you can do, almost anything you want to do.  
I know that you can be, almost anything you want to be. Want to be. What do you want to be, my darling?  
Can you survive  
A collision at the speed of light?  
Can you survive, a collision at the speed of mind?  
Can you survive a collision at the speed of time?  
Can you survive?  
Tell me can you survive it? Can you survive it?  
I don't know.



**Gar, lead guitarist on 'Information Overdose', is on the fence, Brenda and Dale, Kevin and Jennifer, Victoria and me. Behind us is Carol from Morningtown, Stan's daughter, Stan Iverson himself, and Victoria's friend with the dogs is on my right,...and other wonderful people whose names I wish I remembered are scattered hither and thither.**

Part Four (When Everything is Nothing) starts off with the song 'Media Hero'

**And when he died, there was nothing on the last several pages  
There was no mention of a rebirth and there was no  
Written explanation.**

**And I guess you know his face well cause he's been in all of the papers,  
Another one of those heroes who has  
Just now gone to meet his maker**

**And only down on paper does it all make any sense to me. Only in the movies do I ever get a  
chance to see THE END.**

**And everybody loved him cause he was such an inspiration to them,  
You can look up in the sky now and see, a brand new constellation.**

**And they mummified his body, and they put it inside of a museum  
If you pay ten dollars and fifty, they'll let you inside, and you can see him!**

**And only down on paper does it all make any sense to me.  
Only in the pictures do I ever get a chance to see THE END.**

Then there is the surrealistic suicide song, another one of my favorites:

**"Go ahead and do it. You know you're right to think that no one cares.  
No one really cares at all.  
So go ahead and get it over will you! Everyone is waiting for the rain to fall.  
So they can tear down the buildings.  
So they can tear down the walls  
And undress all of your best friends  
And when you ask them why,  
They just say "Because!"**

**Spread out on the sofa she says that she'll  
Just stay for tea  
My god my eyes have seen it all  
Her face is on the billboards  
It's peeling in the wind and the rain  
Now they're tearing down the buildings  
Tearing down the walls  
and now they're  
Undressing all of your best friends,  
And when you ask them why they just say "Because!"**

**And even if you move to the country  
You take the city with you  
when you go  
And it will happen every time  
Don't it make you stop and wonder  
You move so fast you know there isn't even any time to cry  
Now they're tearing down the buildings  
Tearing down the walls  
Now they're undressing all of your best friends,  
Cause nobody cares at all  
Nobody cares any more. Not at all."**

Then the end of the world comes waltzing in, and the Alien City theme is restated:

**You try to shrug it off  
But you can't get enough  
The city is in your blood  
All the words are misunderstood  
The TV says 'You're not alone!' but 'You'd better stay at home!'  
The city is in your blood  
All the words are misunderstood  
They say that we're all going die, we're gonna slide into the sea!  
How can I get the nerve up to disagree?  
Disagree with them all  
The drug pushers on the TV know nothing at all  
They smile as they say to you  
'We are your only hope! We are your future now!'  
But nothing they say is true  
And I can't help but wonder how  
How did we ever make it, make it this far  
How'd we ever make it, make it this far.....**

**Now I am here only energizing your career  
While you sit stupefied from the effects of the camera!  
But now I know that you never did understand,  
If this is your future, you'd better find another man!  
Find another sucker too!**

**Now that the oceans are dead, the tornadoes come down like God's fingers from out of the sky  
Now that the earth has been poisoned by men  
Do you still think like you did that I'm some lucky fellow?  
Do you know how it feels to be alive? Or do you only know how it feels to be dead?  
I only know as I walk the streets alone  
That I don't need to speak anymore because nothing needs to be said  
Nothing needs to be said at all  
You must admit to yourself baby,  
We've said it all! About a hundred millions times or so!  
About a hundred million times or more, we've said it all....**

**Sometimes I think that you're too good to be true  
How many times have you lied awake thinking it's your fault?  
Or did you believe you could really change the world?  
I can't imagine you trading your soul for a vacuum cleaner!**

**All of them monsters, but they hide it inside,  
Don't ever think you can change them.  
They're dead but they're walking,  
They're dead in their minds,  
They're killing the planet  
and they think that YOU are the strange one!**

**It's just an Alien City  
You're stuck here for good in this alien town  
Keep your eyes off them don't give them your pity  
You know that they'll grab you, you know that they'll just take you down!**

This is followed by

**“Say hello, to all of the unfamiliar faces.  
Any time, any place, and every single face you know will do  
In more than one respect, they all resemble you, anyhow.  
Sometimes life gets crazy and the people all appear to you like Zombies.  
Yes they want to drag you down and spit you out and stomp you to the floor. Just look up and  
say to them that this doesn’t matter any more.  
Sometimes I get to thinking that the people are all twisted wicked inside!  
Always checking out your weaknesses, they want to stick it to you.  
Like income tax collectors, used car salesmen, riot police do.  
Don’t you know it’s true?  
When you look into their eyes, don’t you just despise what we’ve come to?”**

**Still I say hello, to all of the unfamiliar faces. Does it really matter much that all that I  
suspect is really true? In more than these respects they still resemble you. Yes it’s true that  
they do!**

And finally it ends with this little number, which appears in a slightly edited form on the bonus tracks. I took out the stuff about killer fogs and the pack of dogs and the bleeding sky, as these were references to songs on Part 3 and Four that were never recorded and didn’t make much sense out of context. However, I include those removed lyrics here:

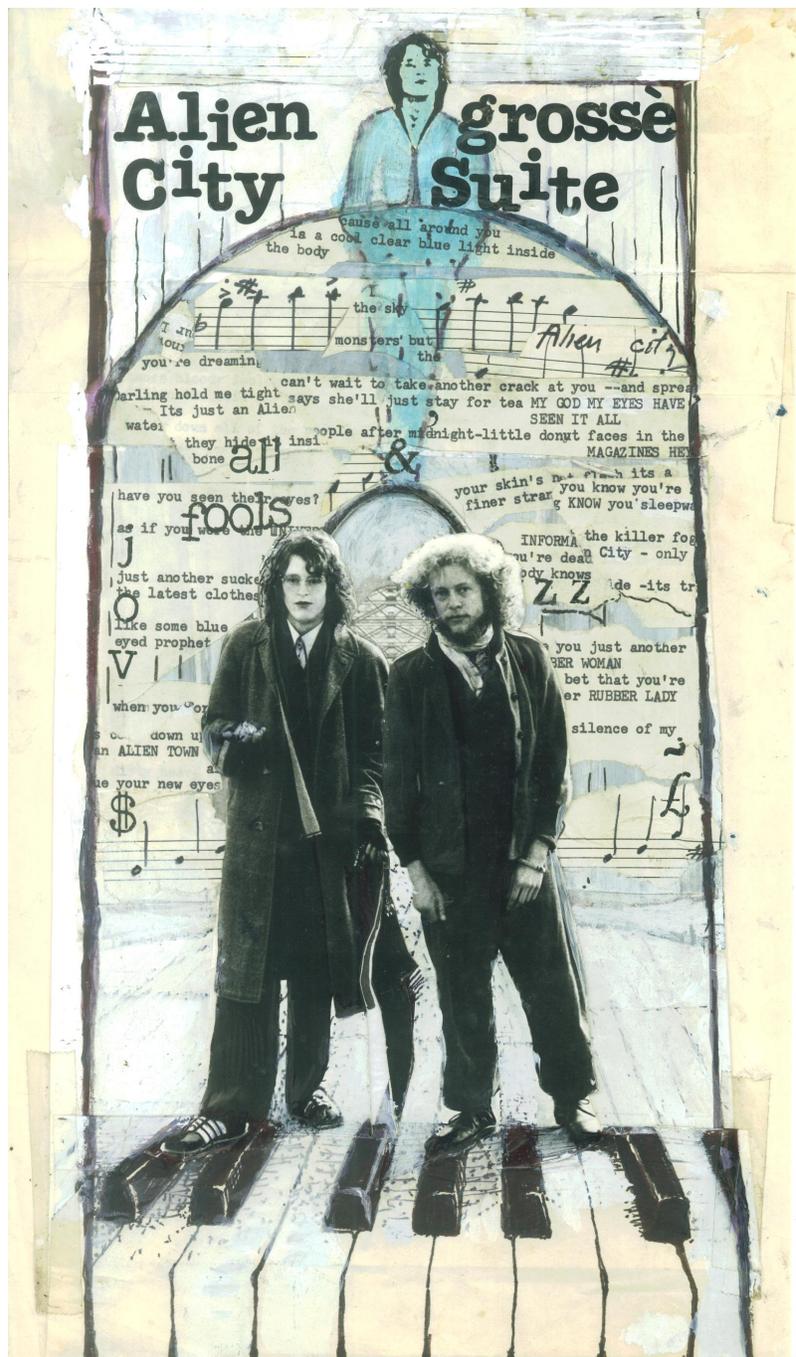
**I’m a sleepy sleep walker  
Wandering around the city after midnight.  
I’m, an astral projector  
I’m way better than a lie detector**

**You find to your surprise, you can’t trust your own eyes  
And you don’t understand the meaning.  
Here comes the fogs around you, like a pack of dogs surround you  
So turn the page, continue reading. The sky above you now is bleeding all over your hands.**

**Look—I know it’s cold, I know you’re soul has frozen. Keep walking, keep walking, keep  
walking- hah hah hah hah hah hah hah**

**I’m a sleepy sleepwalker, making love to all the people after midnight.  
I’m an astral projector. I’m a certified soul inspector.**

**I say: It will be all right, it will work out fine  
I’ll meet you at the edges of the city  
I will gesture with my hands and my fingers  
I’ll say: I’ve never seen you look this pretty!  
Never seen you look so goddamn pretty!  
Look!—  
The road is long  
So I sing this song  
when I am sleep walking, sleep walking sleepwalking  
Hah hah hah hah hah hah, hah hahh hah hah hahahaha yeah!**



Looking back, I can see how my hatred and contempt for the state of things was at the center of the Alien City Suite. I was filled with anger and judgment. It drove me mad, and I actually was confined a few times at various institutions. The ending of the song cycle illustrates this inner battle. We are taught in the Western world to vanquish our foes, and to remove obstacles that are in our way. This kind of thinking has created a world of monsters. That is how so-called Christians can preach peace and love, and at the same time be heavily invested in plutonium and war-making weaponry. That is why the current president lies to everyone while scheming to become an autocrat and have his filthy way with the world and its people. Alien City was a cry in the desert, a cry for sanity in an insane world. That was what motivated me to write it. And when I listen to it today, I still believe it to be true. So my droogies! I hope you have enjoyed this blast from the past. I will end this by saying that many people have told me on various occasions that Alien City was ahead of its time, and revisiting it here now, I'm afraid I have to agree!

