

CROOKED FINGERS BREAKS IN THE ARMOR

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TRACK LISTING:

1. Typhoon
2. Bad Blood
3. The Hatchet
4. The Counterfeiter
5. Heavy Hours
6. Black Candles
7. Went to the City
8. Your Apocalypse
9. War Horses
10. She Tows the Line
11. Our New Favorite

PRESS:

Judy Miller Silverman – Motormouth Media
judy@motormouthmedia.com

Christina Rentz
christina@mergerecords.com

RADIO:

Lindsey Kronmiller
Lindsey@mergerecords.com

In 2009, Eric Bachmann, who writes, records, and performs songs mainly under the name **Crooked Fingers**, would have scoffed at the idea that he'd be releasing a new record in a few years. Or, it's unlikely he'd have scoffed at anything, really, because he's not the kind of guy who flounces about with words like "scoff"—"you're full of shit" seems entirely more likely a response. Lucky for us, however he'd have described it, he would have been wrong. All of which is maybe the long way around to saying that Bachmann did what he could to prevent this new **Crooked Fingers** record, the first since the 2008 release of *Forfeit/Fortune*, from ever coming out. And again, lucky for us, he failed.

Before all that, though, from about 1991 to 1998, Bachmann, along with Eric Johnson, Matt Gentling, and Mark Price, was in the band Archers of Loaf. Sometime in 1998, right around the time Archers of Loaf decided to hang it up, *The Village Voice's* Robert Christgau, in reviewing the band's last studio album *White Trash Heroes*, suggested that "...other indie bands should just retire." It's possible they misunderstood.

In the more recent past and since about the year 2000, Eric Bachmann has focused primarily on **Crooked Fingers**. Under that name, he's released five full-lengths and a couple of EPs. Two of the full-lengths were on Warm Records, two others and both of the EPs were on Merge, and the last full-length was, essentially, self-released. In 2006, between a pair of **Crooked Fingers** records (*Dignity and Shame* in 2005 and *Forfeit/Fortune* in 2008) and for reasons which, presumably, amount to some combination of obstinacy and caprice, he released an album under his own name called *To the Races* on the Saddle Creek label. About these records people have said such things as: "...he's sharing the intimacy of a small room, a couple of instruments, and a man telling secrets" (*The Onion AV Club*); "...as intricate and bewitching as the work of Tom Waits or the Tindersticks" (*Rolling Stone*); "...a welcome masterpiece of emotional subtleties..." (*All Music Guide*).

In the still more recent past, in August of 2009, Bachmann moved to Taipei to teach English, an earlier aspiration, intending to quit writing songs and playing music. This was a move he now describes as "...kind of like when Michael Jordan went to play baseball for a few years, except I'm not nearly as good at anything as Michael Jordan was at basketball. Or baseball." And, before we make too big a thing of this and more accurately recognize it as a clumsy narrative

device, it's worth pointing out that relatively quickly he discovered his inspiration restored and began writing new songs within the first few months of arriving in Taipei. He was back in the US, and working, six months later.

Eric Bachmann lives in Athens, Georgia, these days, where he recorded **Breaks in the Armor** at The Bakery with Matt Yelton (live sound engineer for the Pixies) throughout the winter of 2010/2011, enlisting the help of Liz Durrett on backing vocals. It's a cohesive and diverse set of songs with less adorned and more direct and affecting arrangements. Beautifully understated, artfully phrased, and ultimately a paean to perseverance, the album seems to suggest that the breaks in the armor are more important than the armor itself.

"You come and go alone / You don't stand a chance"

That's from the track "Went to the City" from **Breaks in the Armor**, and though, short of directly asking him (which, in narrowing the possibilities, would sort of ruin the fun), there's really, and happily, no telling what the precise, intended meaning of that line is, it does get at what Bachmann found missing and has rediscovered. There's an undeniable sense of community he's regained in returning to writing and performing as **Crooked Fingers**, working with Archers of Loaf and Merge Records again, and moving back to the southeast. In 2011, Archers of Loaf reunited, toured the US, and played on *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*, and with the August 2011 reissue of their debut album *Icky Mettle*, Merge will begin a series of expanded re-mastered reissues of the band's four studio albums. Over the course of the coming year, Bachmann will alternate between touring as **Crooked Fingers** and with Archers of Loaf, making the most of two distinct and rewarding modes of expression and performance. All of which seems to be exactly where he should be again.

You come and go alone, and it's in between these things where you find the people and experiences and art that matter, that make the difference. You don't stand a chance, but that's exactly why you should try, right?

Eric Bachmann enjoys walks on the beach, movies (though he's not a big horror fan), art, good food, and stimulating conversation. He can currently bench press about 240, and his personal best was somewhere in the 275–285 range. **Breaks in the Armor** is his sixth full-length record as **Crooked Fingers** (seventh if you count the Eric Bachmann one).

