

**Richard Reed Parry's *Quiet River of Dust Vol. 1*
Fall 2018
ANTI- Records**

A man travelling in a foreign land wanders through a forest of ghosts, who sing his past back to him. A rainstorm that starts and never ends. A boy dissolves into a body of water. These images inspire music that tells the story of two spheres: in one, an embodied experience of the physical world; in the other, something disembodied, dissolved and oceanic. Japanese folk myths, death poems and British folk music are tributaries flowing into a river of late-20th century avant-garde composition and traditional song craft, written and performed by a member of a Grammy-winning rock band. This is a meditative, widescreen musical experience with Beach Boy harmonies and a hypnotic pulse. Layered songs that move in a linear fashion, following a current rather than circular composition. This is Richard Reed Parry's *Quiet River of Dust*. Being released as two volumes, *Quiet River of Dust Vol. 1* will be available on the start of the autumn equinox, September 21 2018. *Quiet River of Dust Vol. 2* is coming out next year on the spring equinox 2019.

Long before he joined Montreal's Arcade Fire in 2003, Parry grew up in a thriving folk music community in Toronto, where house parties were full of singing, where weekly gatherings featured dances of the British Isles, where all the progeny were routinely corralled into singing on popular children's albums. While a student of electroacoustic music and contemporary dance in university, he formed the instrumental ensemble Bell Orchestre, who have released three albums, with another expected soon. In 2014, he released an album of biologically inspired compositions, *Music for Heart and Breath*, on the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon classical label.

Quiet River of Dust has been slowly gestating for the last decade, in many ways a necessary respite from Parry's other gigs. Creating this music grew into a meditative practice. "I'm lousy at sitting still and being nothing," he says. "But being out in the natural world or being immersed in music is the meditation for me. That's the heart of this record: the experience of transcending the place that you're in, getting lost in the feeling of where you end and where the world begins, in a dreamlike world of music and thought." It is music meant to be absorbed in a setting devoid of other distractions, not shuffled into your streaming playlist—a tall demand these days but one worth the time.

The genesis of these songs came after Arcade Fire's first tour of Japan in February 2008. Parry stayed on for weeks after the last show, heading to a monastery for some solace in "the biggest silence you've ever heard." One day he was walking alone in a massive, snow-covered cedar forest when he heard distant voices, voices that sounded a lot like his father's folk group back in Toronto, Friends of Fiddlers Green. (Parry was 18 when his father died in 1995.) "There was no reason for something to sound like full-throated, British-Isle folk singing there," he recalls. "I walked and walked but I could never get closer to where the music was coming from." The ghostly experience inspired the song "On the Ground," which in turn inspired the rest of the song cycle. When it came time to record "On the Ground," he enlisted his father's former colleagues on concertina, Northumbrian pipes and fiddle.

More material began to flow, including one song on Vol. 1 called "River of Death" and another about a small boy who disappears into the ocean while his parents are sleeping on the beach. On a return trip to Japan years later, Parry was on a hike by a hot-spring river when he saw a sign directing travelers to a "River of Death" ("Sai No Kawara"). He learned that it was a pre-Buddhist mythological concept of a place where parents go to mourn dead children, a body of water understood to be a liminal space between life and an afterlife.

The two halves of *Quiet River of Dust* are meant to represent each side of that river. There is a thematic and sonic consistency throughout: the sensation of standing in that river, of "having an ecstatic experience in nature," says Parry, "when you transcend your physical form and you just don't know what you are or where you belong." Hence the song, "I Was in the World, Was the World in Me?" Both volumes of *Quiet River of Dust* bleed into one another, by design. "It feels like a multi-sided die to me," says Parry. "It's all the same song, just a different prismatic view into this song world."

The music owes debts to that of his father, but Parry didn't want to write in a traditional British Isles folk style. Nor did he want to create the kind of pop songs to which tens of thousands of people could sing along, as he does with Arcade Fire. That band's landmark 2004 debut, *Funeral*, made a grandiose statement through big, bold gestures; *Quiet River of Dust* does the same, with vertical layers of sonic architecture, but with the inverse approach: small, soft and gentle, though just as grand. Parry wanted to create a tangible aural garden of rapturous colours that invite exploration, an immersive experience.

Three touchstones while recording were the work of avant-garde cellist and songwriter Arthur Russell, the Orb's *Live '93* album, and Tom Waits's *Bone Machine*—the latter mixed by Tchad Blake, who welcomed Parry's invitation to mix parts of this record. Other guests include Parry's partner Laurel Sprengelmeyer of Little Scream, Stef Schneider of Bell Orchestre, Dallas Good of the Sadies, Yuka Honda of Cibo Matto, Amedeo Pace from Blonde Redhead, and The National's Aaron and Bryce Dessner, who first urged Parry to perform this music live in 2012 at an All Tomorrow's Parties in the U.K. For a musician raised in a musical family and environment, collaboration and community are essential parts of the process.

Parry will launch Vol. 1 in Montreal with a residency in a planetarium-like dome in Montreal, the Satosphere, with half-animated films creating a "floating world" around the performers and audience, he says. After that, "I want to play interesting places where it feels there is space for this. I feel not like taking it to loud places, but to quiet places. I'm very curious about who this music is going to find."

Maybe even those ghosts in the Japanese forest will hear the result of the journey they inspired.

Bio by Michael Barclay, the author of 'The Never-Ending Present: The Story of Gord Downie and the Tragically Hip'.