

# OVER THE RHINE *love & revelation*

## Some Thoughts On Love & Revelation

As I sit at the kitchen table this morning with a cup of hot coffee, I remember that 2019 marks the 30th anniversary of Over the Rhine: 30 years of writing, recording and life on the road.

Yes, it's true. We recorded our very first handful of demos on a Tascam reel-to-reel 8-track in March of 1989 in a friend's basement garage. I guess that means for a brief moment, we were an '80s band.

I wonder if every young person who feels the irresistible gravitational pull of art — whether it's songwriting, painting, filmmaking or playing the tenor saxophone — secretly wonders if it's just something they'll get out of their system. I know I did. Maybe this was all a passing phase, and at some point I'd pick up the phone and call my parents with bittersweet news: the band had broken up. No more songwriting, no more making records, no more touring. We were all going to get real jobs, get back to our real lives, and everybody could just breathe a sigh of relief.

In the case of Karin and I, the years passed, and eventually we realized we were never going to pick up the phone and make that call: This was our real life.

Looking back now, the fact that we are still making music for a living feels mostly like a gift. Yes, we worked hard. But the fact that there are people who still listen deeply to the music we made 20 years ago, that doesn't feel like something you put on a to do list. And maybe the greater gift is there are people who still care deeply about the music we are releasing this year. Maybe it's best just to be grateful and not think about it too much.

I remember hearing an interview with Tony Bennett. He talked about two questions a young artist can ask. The first is, What must I do to be famous? This approach opens the artist up to countless destructive forces from both within and without. A different question is, What must I do to make this sustainable? To practice a craft for the long haul? As a young singer, Tony had had some success and had been living pretty hard, but then he came to a point in his life where he realized he never wanted to stop singing. If he lost or wrecked his voice because of choices he was making, life would be unimaginable. He never took another drink.

In his poem, *Betting On The Muse*, Charles Bukowski thinks out loud about baseball players and how they peak in their careers relatively early in life, and then have to think about Plan B. He contrasts that with the vocation of a writer: a writer has an opportunity to get better at a craft over the course of an entire lifetime.

It's appropriate and good to lift a glass to 30 years of music. But honestly, what excites Karin and I more are the possibilities, the untilled soil of the next 30 years. What must we do to make this sustainable? What must we do to continue getting better at a craft over the course of an entire lifetime?

Well, it begins with the music. One of the few remaining things

that can get us out of bed relatively early: the possibility that our best work still lies ahead of us, that our best songs have yet to be written, that a curious heart can still beat a little faster from time to time and be surprised.

The music has to move us.

And what must we do to make this sustainable?

We do find ourselves reinventing and rethinking what our music career can look like in 2019. (Want to make a millennial's head spin? Remind them that you started a band before the existence of cell phones.)

Karin and I are restoring an 1870s barn into our own 200 seat performing arts venue on our small hidden away farm in Clinton County, Ohio. Walk into that barn and it feels like you're standing inside an old Martin guitar. We dream of Saturday nights in a glowing loft bursting at the seams with music. In the words of Karin, There is still so much music left to be made.

And we have started our own music and arts festival. Nowhere Else Festival takes place on our farm in Clinton County, Ohio, every Memorial Day Weekend. We are now in our fourth year and have already curated and hosted a stunning array of bands and songwriters, filmmakers, photographers, painters, National Book Award-winning authors and local farmers with stories to tell. It feels like an extended musical family reunion.

Maybe in 2019, having a music career is mostly about learning how to build community, finding your tribe of kindred spirits, discovering how to inspire and take care of each other.

That feels about right.

And in the end, maybe there is only one business plan that matters to a songwriter: Keep going. You either do or you don't.

We're not kids any more. We've put loved ones in the ground, have seen friends lose children, or deal with daunting chronic illness. There is undoubtedly some grieving on our new record.

And like many Americans, we feel more than a little off-balance at times, like we need to resist some daily tide of cruelty and deception.

But it's also good to remember what it is that we are actually for, what we still believe in.

You can hear it all on our new record. And hopefully the conversation will continue — and deepen — on the records we're making 30 years from now.

**Love & Revelation,**

**Linford Detweiler & Karin Bergquist  
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