

Band: Two Headed Emperor
Album Title: Deracination
Label: Falling A Records
Genre: Progressive Rock / Experimental



Description:
The album Deracination is Two Headed Emperor's ninth release. It is the seventh album from a discography of seven albums, one EP. and a single. The sound of Two Headed Emperor reflects the eclectic tastes of both members and is a fusion of all the musical things we have enjoyed since we first started making music together in the late 1970's. Each album has its own musical perspective, sound palette and blend of ideas. On this current album, we have taken a more rock-based approach to the songs with guitar and organ taking the fore but have also increased the level of manipulated sound from found sound recordings that we make. Sometimes the sounds can border on the chaotic, yet the

album remains firmly a collection of songs.

The structure, musical journey, and cohesion of tracks on any album we make is very important to us and often we are working on more than one album at a time because we may feel a track doesn't suit a particular project and is better suited in a different project, or a track may spawn a completely new idea for an album. This album was recorded in two locations, Falling A studios one and two, being grandiose titles for Peter and Barry's respective recording facilities during much of 2021, with the original idea stemming from 2020. The album cover was from a photograph taken by Barry Lamb at St Peter In The Forest, Walthamstow, graphically edited by Peter Ashby. The inner sleeve photo was taken by Barry in Marrakesh. A promotional video of Stemwinder was created featuring footage shot by Barry Lamb at St Peter In The Forest, Walthamstow, and other locations with video editing by Peter Ashby.

Influences for the album:

Organ led bands such as Atomic Rooster, Egg, Van Der Graaf Generator. Experimental music creators such as those from the BBC Radiophonic workshop, and groups such as Faust and Can. Always somewhere in our influences are Captain Beefheart and many post punk bands

Band Line Up:
Peter Ashby - electric and acoustic guitars/guitalele/bass/keyboards/percussion/occasional lead vocals and backing vocals/field recordings/sound manipulation/programming /mixing and editing/musical arrangements,
Barry Lamb - lead vocals and backing vocals,/lyrics/saxophone,/woodwind,/wind synth/harmonica,/percussion,/field recordings /some keyboards/occasional guitar and bass/sound manipulation/atmospheres/project scenarios, Georgia Lamb guest vocals

CD Track Listing:
1- What We All Want
2- Stemwinder
3- Nervous
4- Deracination
5- Small Talk
6- Broken Vows
7- Give Them Rope

Hailing from Clacton on Sea and Woodford Green, England, we find Experimental Progressive Rock duo **TWO HEADED EMPEROR** who have a fantastic new seven track CD out now called 'Deracination' which runs in at just under forty-five minutes long and is the bands seventh release. Guitarist Peter Ashby is sitting in his garden pub with a bottle of Cheeky Elf ale that was given to him as a Christmas present. It is a Thursday morning in the sunny seaside resort of Clacton on Sea and for the first time in a few days it isn't raining. "I can see through the pub window that my resident blackbird is splashing about in the bird bath. somewhere one of my neighbours is clanking bottles in a half-hearted attempt at a post-Christmas party clean up and another neighbour is hammering. There always seems to be someone hammering at least once every other day," he adds. Meanwhile, singer Barry Lamb is at his home studio. It is very early Sunday morning. The only sounds he can hear are birdsong punctuated by a small flock of noisy feral parakeets, the occasional underground train moving through Woodford station and the low hum of some traffic in the distance,

probably from the M11 motorway. "I have been up for about an hour and started my day as I do every day with some quiet space, making notes, reflective journaling, thinking about the day ahead and how I am going to use my time, writing down random thoughts and ideas. I am very focused on gratitude today and thinking about people who are important to me," he expresses.



What mostly sets Two Headed Emperor apart from other artists is their approach to the music making process, Both Barry and Peter have always had D.I.Y. sensibilities and a sense of humour. "We decided at the very beginning of founding Two Headed Emperor that the Japanese world view of Wabi Sabi would be an ideal thing to remember when creating any project, This view can roughly be described as finding the beauty in the imperfect. So, we don't mind the odd musical mistake or technical buzz and click or the occasional downright full-fledged gaffe if it actually sounds ok on

the final result. Sometimes we use our own little in-joke of creating an anti-climax to a song or project. Basically, we don't adhere to any rule book nor perceived wisdom but always go with our own feelings on whether a track or project is ready or not," smiles Peter. "Also, we do not have any one formula for creating tracks. They can start with a lyric or from a musical line. They can come from an improvisation or from a strict plan. Sometimes they start off as two different things and become one or one thing and become more. Anything is ok if the end result achieves what we hoped for." Wabi Sabi is a worldview centered on the acceptance of transience and imperfection. "One of the key marks of it, is beauty that is 'imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete'. In the west, we tend to have a view of beauty based on classical Greek aesthetics. Our art, creative environments and even our worldviews are obsessed with the idea of perfection. It seems to me that this is a long way from reality," explains Barry. "The human experience is one of being flawed, messy, broken, damaged and quite frankly dysfunctional. It is always my goal both

musically and lyrically to express human brokenness and contradiction."

"Characteristics of the wabi-sabi aesthetic include asymmetry, roughness, simplicity, intimacy, and appreciation of the innocent integrity of natural objects and processes.

Wabi - key ideas

imperfect, impermanent, incomplete, suffering, emptiness, absence of self-nature, tarnished, isolation, rustic, understated elegance, quirks, and anomalies from the process of construction, imperfection

Sabi - key ideas

simplicity, economy, austerity, modesty, intimacy, lean, withered, beauty & serenity from ageing process, wear and tear, visible attempts to repair

Expressed in its simplest terms is 'Flawed Beauty'
The desolation of solitude
In praise of shadows



"A quote that captures the essence of wabi sabi in the arts is 'Projects are never truly

complete', or there is a quote 'A work of art is never finished, it is merely abandoned'. Was it E.M. Forster who said that? I can't remember. This would certainly be true of all our musical ventures to date. We are constantly re-imagining what has been before, for example many musical phrases and especially lines from lyrics will reappear in a new context and setting from earlier projects, they serve as hyperlinks and connection points," he explains and points out.

Peter has always loved music from as far back as he can remember. He was always drawn to the weirder music and sounds that he heard. When he was three years old, he distinctly remembers feeling insulted by the songs on 'Watch with Mother's Andy Pandy' because he felt they were so basic and silly. Luckily, his elder brothers would bring home interesting records such as The Who - 'Sell Out' and 'Undead' by Ten Tears After. "My dad played piano and liked some classical and opera as well as certain crooners and light music. He also had a small collection of seventy-eights which had all sorts of strange sites on them. He gave me a different perspective and I do love some orchestral music and piano music

because of him. But my first love is music with electric instruments," he expresses. The song 'See Emily Play' by Pink Floyd was amazing to his young ears as was 'Desdemona' by John's Children and later 'King of the Rumbling Spires' which is still one of his favourite records today." I was hooked on all the good music as it came out. Some famous, and some not so," he smiles. One Christmas he was given an acoustic guitar when he was about the age of nine years old, and he persevered teaching himself until he conquered the barre chord.



"Once you achieved this you wonder why you couldn't do it before! Suddenly the neck of the guitar opened up. From then on, I pestered my dad to get me an electric guitar," he recalls. This went on for a few years until one day in some big department store, he was with his dad and there was this beautiful looking SG style guitar. "My dad took pity on me and bought it for me. I was so happy! Now as it happens this guitar was made by Kay and was

rather crappy but at that time I didn't care. It took me many more months to acquire an amp which was a little Marshall combo. Sometime before I had met kindred spirit and co-conspirator Barry and we were formulating grand schemes of playing in groups and subverting school on any given day. That little guitar saw me through the early years of Frenzy Melon. Part of or present-day philosophy stems from the fact that we always had to make do with very basic equipment and utilize toy instruments and low budget stuff. This has fostered an extreme anti snobbery attitude in me when it comes to making music.



The next guitar I owned was bought through my mum's catalogue (do you remember those...life savers for us poor people) and it was a Les Paul copy made by Satellite I think," he tells me. Like Pete, Barry had had a love of music for as long as he can remember. His dad played trombone in a jazz orchestra. "He's a massive jazz fan, so I

can remember hearing the likes of Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Joe Harriott, Count Basie and countless others from an early age. Miles Davis' take on 'Porgy and Bess' remains one of my favourite albums to this day," he enthuses. His dad also had an interest in the more progressive end of the rock music spectrum, so Barry was introduced to Van Der Graaf Generator very early on and by his teen years had acclimatized his ears to a very different sound palette than most of his friends were tuning into. Whilst everyone at school was raving about 'Dark Side of The Moon', he was much more enamored with the post Syd Barrett, pre-Dark Side of the Moon Pink Floyd. "It just seemed more adventurous and interesting to me. I did enjoy some of the more mainstream music too. I think the first time I heard 'Life on Mars?' by David Bowie, it awakened an emotional response to music that I had not previously experienced. My mum was a lot more mainstream in her taste, she loved the music of Roy Orbison, The Everly Brothers, Johnny Cash, The Carpenters, all artists that I appreciate much more these days than I did at the time," he explains. His grandfather was from

New Jersey, and he was into a lot of blues and edgy politically charged folk music so, it was through him that the youngster discovered Blind Lemon Jefferson, Robert Johnson, Bob Dylan and the likes of Fairport Convention and Bert Jansch. He then met Pete in secondary school when he was eleven years old. "We were and still are kindred spirits. Pete had the advantage of two older brothers who opened his ears to a lot of interesting stuff that had not been on my radar at all. It was through hanging out with Pete that I discovered the likes of Frank Zappa, King Crimson and so much more. I was also heavily influenced and inspired by Radio Caroline which at that time was just off the coast of where we lived. On a clear night, we could see the lights from the Mi Amigo. We used to wander along the seafront listening to Radio Caroline on a battery powered transistor radio. I also was often inspired by artists that I discovered on the Old Grey Whistle Test and the John Peel show on radio. I was fascinated by all types of music. I can remember hearing the full-length version of 'Autobahn' by Kraftwerk for the first time on Radio Caroline one night and was completely blown away.

I hadn't heard anything like it before," he adds. "I think the real catalyst for me to dive in and make music was punk rock. Both myself and Pete were inspired by the immediacy, the vitality, energy and the "make it happen" spirit of punk. We figured that this was something we could do as we were still in the infancy of learning to play instruments, thus Frenzid Melon was born. Before that, we had attempted to get a band together with some school friends and plotted a course but as Pete says, we were kicked out before we ever played together. Some of the early Frenzid Melon songs maligned the band that kicked us out. I suppose a precursor to what is these days commonplace in the world of hip hop and known as a 'diss track'. Frenzid Melon were essentially a punk band, but we would often divert into more experimental territory and draw from our other musical interests to the best of our ability. Punk / art rock might be a more accurate description." Pete's musical inspirations are most good music from the sixties and seventies, but especially some of the groups on the early Vertigo label, Island, Harvest. Liberty and Decca Gentle Giant , Patto. May Blitz, Jethro

Tull, King Crimson, East of Eden, Bonzo Dog Band, Groundhogs, Egg. Caravan Van Der Graaf Generator. "So many more I can't list them all wonderful underground music as it was then. Frank Zappa, I love too. The first album I heard of his was 'Mothers live at the Fillmore' which blew me away when it came out. Although at that time I didn't understand half of the filthy words that I would sing along to. Very lucky that I didn't get a whacking from my mum. Later I really got into punk and more so post punk which I thought of as the new progressive music. I always loved music that made me think 'I haven't heard anything like this before'. There is even much disco and pop music that I like Some that I love. I then discovered more jazz fusion and Latin , although I had known Mahavishnu Orchestra and some others from when they first began a lot had escaped my notice. That lead me to more Avant Garde jazz that I had missed," he tells me. Barry could list about two hundred albums that he finds completely absorbing and have influenced him in some way. "Apart from the artists that I have already mentioned as influences on my musical landscape, I would say the whole

post punk period from 1978-1985 was completely absorbing, everything felt adventurous and interesting. We were very much part of the cassette culture scene at that time and there are so many undiscovered gems from that period. I really love the more experimental end of rock music from the early to mid-seventies but mostly it would be music that is not over polished, has a bit of grit, passion, and an edge about it, something interesting, unusual, and not very predictable. However, equally I might draw inspiration from something I hear in a mainstream pop music tune, a classical piece or even a random sound I might hear in the house or out on a walk or something," he expresses.



When he is not writing or performing Pete enjoys his craft beers and he has built by himself from mostly recycled bits and bobs a little pub in his garden which he enjoys with friends and family. "On and off I have enjoyed gardening over the years. In 2021 I grew

various edible plants including courgettes, rocket, radishes, runner beans, green beans, tomatoes, peppers, peas and spring onions and herbs such as basil and sage. I love walking and used to walk lengthy trails like the Essex Way with my son and we have trailblazed through much of the Tendring area where I live over the years. I used to walk our Labrador every day but unfortunately, he passed away just over a year ago and so I don't have that pleasure anymore. I have collected vinyl records in the past and still have about a thousand or so albums and several hundred singles. Mostly I have converted to CDs now though. Sometimes I write poetry. Other pleasures are solving crosswords especially cryptic ones and I like other puzzles. I don't get that much chance to read but if I do it is Orwell and Chekov, Poe or classic era murder mystery stories and factual books," he tells me.

Barry is fascinated by human nature, what makes people tick, what inspires them, and what causes them to plunge into the darkness of life. "I am a psychology, philosophy, theology, and history nerd. I love deep conversation, understanding different worldviews, writing, and observing. I quite often

that spills over into my lyrics as well as drawing from my own experiences. I am a bit of an introvert, a confident introvert (type five enneagram), I journal every day. I like quiet places, nature, I absolutely love the sea. I come from a sailing family and that's a very important part of my story. I enjoy football and am involved in a small way in non-league football as my son plays at quite a decent level. I enjoy taking photographs and going for long walks. I probably have a book or two in me, but I am just chewing over ideas on that front at the moment. I have a number of favourite places I enjoy visiting. I have a small circle of spiritually minded friends who keep me grounded and ensure I am not spending too much time in my own head," he chuckles.



The new album 'Deracination' consists of seven tracks that have a dark and sinister undertone about them. The heavy organ and guitar have classic tones but are set against sometimes unrelenting

noises. "The vocals are to the fore and deliver a somewhat troubling commentary on living throughout these uncertain days.

Sometimes the guitar is as frenetic as the background sound manipulations and strange saxophone cuts through here and there," explains Pete. "Despite all that the tracks are very much songs in the traditional sense and the forms act as a kind of security blanket to guide the listener through some of the more troubling sonic aspects." "This what I wrote in my journal about 'Deracination' on the eve of its release," continues Barry.

"2021 seems to have flown by at meteoric speed. Global events have gone from tragic to bizarre, with the political and cultural leaders taking centre stage becoming increasingly comedic in their self-promotion and self-preservation. We may well be on a fast track towards the dystopia of Babylon. There are great achievements, wonderfully expressive art, sophisticated technology, and lots of stimulating ideas out there but the global condition whilst admittedly complex, seems completely dangerous and dysfunctional as we struggle with indifference towards

suffering and pain. Living and working in London offers much to celebrate and enjoy. It is a beautifully multi-cultural metropolis, a vibrant melting pot of the arts and fusion of experiential highs but when you peel back the veneer it is an abyss of heartache and suffering. The same is true for pretty much every city around the world, I am sure. It is against that backdrop that we deliver the Seventh Two Headed Emperor album 'Deracination', he explains to me. With this new album there is less complication in the music with no unusual time signatures or rhythms and no improvised parts other than solos. The music stays mainly with one set of instruments and varies sonically from track to track by using different background atmospheres, unlike our other albums where there may have been more variety in the instrumentation from one track to the next. "On our previous albums a lot of our field recordings have been used without manipulation where the sounds remain natural or slice of life, but this time they have been used as if they are other instruments mimicking the role of oscillators or percussion for example," explains Pete. "I think

what Pete says is correct although I would add that we tend to approach each project with a limited sound palette and synopsis of the atmosphere we are attempting to create. I will often have some of the lyrics formed the themes and ideas. This is the first time we have had the Hammond Organ play such a significant role, many of the previous albums we have opted for mellotron but here I think we created a uniquely different atmosphere to any of its predecessors where there are moments of overlap from one album to the next. There are obvious connections that you can pick up on this album from the previous two but in some ways, it has brought a progressive rock sound from the early seventies into the 21st century. I think it has an otherworldly, haunting atmosphere in a way that we have not approached it before," adds Barry. 'Deracination' was recorded in both Clacton and Woodford Green over a period of about a year and produced by Pete. The guys used their respective home studios as they always do. "The main difference this time has been that we weren't able to record physically in the same space at all this time whereas usually at

least some parts of our album are made together. Having said that we have been pioneers of distance recording for many years now. Even back with Frenzid Melon when we were just using multiple cassette recorders to achieve multi tracking we would sometimes record in different locations and compile later. But even in the era of digital recording back in the early days when sending digital files over the internet wasn't an option then we would exchange files on CDs where necessary using good ol' snail mail. I have recorded a lot of tracks that way with people I have never met from other countries including Switzerland and Italy, so we were very well prepared when it came to founding Two Headed Emperor," expresses Pete. "I always take on mixing and production duties as I have the facilities and time to do so. But of course, Barry has input into musical decisions after rough mixes are made and during mastering as indeed, he has at all stages of the process. Both Barry and Pete have the approach to making an album that in some ways is similar to a science experiment. "When Two Headed Emperor became a reality in 2017, we recounted several LP's

that inspired us and talked about how they were a holistic experience with thoughtfully considered track sequence, the limitation of twenty-two minutes per side and the artwork being something that captured the atmosphere of the music. All of this has been lost in the world of digital and shuffle and the way that people listen to music has changed enormously. We wanted to recreate the experience of the rock album in all its limitations and all of its glory, so that's what we set out to do," says Barry. The guys decided on an approach that was perhaps a bit different to the way that rock albums are typically made and was quite a systematic approach. "However, we are not slaves to this approach and have at times ventured off the path and done things a little differently. For the most part this is how we record an album and "Deracination" followed this path reasonably closely. We always start with a synopsis. We come up with a title for the album, brainstorm the concept, theme, message we want to get across, come up with visual ideas for the artwork, videos, tentative song titles and the sound palette we want to work with (i.e., what instruments we

want to use) and overall style. Mostly I kick start this process but some of the albums have materialized as spin offs of other projects and have been driven by Pete. I tend to be the instigator of the songs. I come up with the lyrics, some basic musical ideas, it may be a motif, it may be developed tune. I record a draft version of the song using my vocals, some instrumentation and send each file to Pete. Pete builds on what I have sent to him, by adding his own ideas and recording various instruments. Sometimes he will request that I redo one of my parts, sometimes he will replace one of my parts with something else that he thinks will work better and we send the files back and forth to each other until we are happy with the composition element," enthuses Barry, At this stage, the guys then get together in Pete's studio, listen to what they have and critique it, suggesting improvements, changes, deciding if they need to add something else or take something away and make it more minimalist. "We might also discuss the visuals in a bit more detail. We had to do this remotely on this occasion due to lockdown. Following our critique, we record the parts that need to be

changed or improved. This might be done together in Pete's studio or individually in our respective studios. In this case, also because of lockdown we had to do this in our own individual studios. Pete then sets about working on the production and mixes of the tracks and I start looking to develop a portfolio of images and video clips for the visuals. I will go out film, take pictures, find images that can be either purchased or borrowed from the public domain. I send the portfolio to Pete along with any ideas, storyboard notes etc. and he creates the artwork and video. We meet, listen to the finished album all the way through look at the artwork and the video. Make any final edits and then we are ready to get the album out. We usually take a month off after that before starting the next album. The most exciting part of the process for me is the first playback which is when I first get a sense of what the finished album will sound like. In the case of 'Deracination', it ticked all the boxes of my synopsis and has exceeded my expectations," he marvels. For Pete choosing a highlight from the album is difficult as he has not thought about that

before now. "Probably it is the title track as I like Georgia's haunting vocals and it is quite unexpected when the guitar riff comes in with the descending oscillation effect. Quite a dramatic moment. Also, the middle section is very dense and almost overcrowded but is certainly powerful. Also, Barry blows his tonsils out on the chorus which is fun," he smiles. Barry thinks that this is the one album that the band have made where he really loves every single track. "It is difficult to single out one track. I have an intimate relationship with every song. I love the title track for the same reasons that Pete has suggested but I have to say 'Broken Vows' really grabs me. That track was not even originally intended for this album, but Pete took my vocal and some instrumental bits that I had recorded and completely reimagined the song, giving it a completely different atmosphere than I had originally envisioned. It blew my mind when I heard it for the first time and every time I listen to it, I hear nuances that I had not previously detected." The band do not do live shows as they could not possibly recreate live what they do on the albums with just the two of them and their meagre financial

resources. "We have other commitments in life that get in the way of that. With all that being said however, it doesn't mean that it won't ever happen. We may well find a way in the future, but it certainly won't be anytime soon. Maybe one day we will create an album that is sparse enough to take on the road or there may be other more interesting solutions to the problem. We have a theory about it that we will not discuss here," he adds all hush hush.

As previously mentioned, the guys work apart a lot when creating our albums, so the pandemic did not affect them too much. "Maybe the album turned out differently to what it might have been if we had had sessions together but there is no way of knowing if that would have really made much difference. The main annoyance was having to miss our annual Christmas bash in 2020 (Basically we usually go out for a meal and a beer together just before Christmas) We also had to cancel it this year but that was not directly linked to Covid. The lockdowns in 2020 helped us as Barry was heavily involved in The Miniatures 2020 project and we were on several tracks on that. I don't think that under normal circumstance many of the people involved

would have had the time to participate, explains Pete. "In many ways lockdown helped us become more efficient, we managed to fine tune some of the niggles of working remotely, just as many other people did. It's been an especially grisly time for people in the arts, especially those involved in any kind of performing arts. Fortunately, we are not in that world, and our livelihood does not depend on live performance, so all it did was to focus us more intently on our own processes of creation, iron out some niggles and helped us be more prolific in our output. I worked on the fortieth anniversary celebration of Morgan Fisher's much loved 'Miniatures' in 2020 pulling together one hundred and twenty plus musicians from all over including some of the contributors to the original album and its much-loved millennial sequel ...progressive rock legends, post punk archetypes, folk heroes, dub poets, avant-garde pioneers. I was really pleased with that. It is a beautiful work of art in its own right, and as Pete said we appeared on a number of the tracks which was good fun. The album formed new collaborative partnerships and connections and will directly have an impact

on our next album at least," adds Barry. In the future there will be more Two Headed Emperor albums for certain. Two are already partly recorded. "Maybe we will explore video more too. We are improving with the visual medium all the time and are starting to get new ideas for that. Also, I think there will be more involvement from and collaborations with other people. It is already starting to happen. One of those two albums I mentioned is featuring Ric Sanders from Fairport Convention on violin. Again, the coronavirus situation actually helped us there as he had more time on his hands than usual. We will continue to explore different aspects and styles of music, but I suspect there will always be a progressive slant to it all as that is at the heart of Two headed Emperor. We will continue for as long as we feel we have something to offer and while we enjoy what we are doing which is very important. I do really enjoy being part of Two Headed Emperor. It is definitely the most satisfying thing I have ever been involved with," says Pete with satisfaction. "We have at least another five albums in his head. "I think we really need to do some more work on our videos. We recently

recorded a radio session for some of the stations and programmes that have supported us over the last few years. We may do some more of that kind of thing. We delivered a couple of cover versions and a song that was earmarked for the next album, but we felt was not a good fit and too good to not use. We also recorded a version of "In the bleak midwinter" which we just uploaded to YouTube as a Christmas card thank you note. That may be something that we will do as a bit of a seasonal tradition. We tentatively had the idea of making a film but that's something lurking around in the background," concludes Barry, bringing an end to our conversation.

'Deracination' is available now on CD and also from all the usual digital platforms as well as Bandcamp," concludes Barry, bringing an end to our conversation.

Check Two Headed Emperor out at <https://www.fallingarecords.com>
<https://www.facebook.com/twoheadedemperor>
<https://twoheadedemperor.bandcamp.com>
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvJMocvtjO0Tee_t9AGjw1A
<https://www.barrylamb.com>
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