

STEPHEN hunley

The other side of never

My life story is as common and uncommon as the next. My story as it relates to my music is as straight up as it is in disguise and it's entirely open for interpretation.

What fuels me as a songwriter and artist is the power to connect with every song. An individual's interpretation and connection to a lyric or melody is important to me. We're not all wired the same; it's a beautiful thing that I can write a song about a subject from my perspective, and the listener can relate to it in a completely different way. It's like the

"alternate meaning" has always been a part of my creative subconscious; it just lays dormant until the very moment the song hits the listener's ear and then the music, or the message, becomes whatever it needs to be in that moment.

THE OTHER SIDE OF NEVER *is a window to moments in my life and those closest to me.*

Embodying the essence of authenticity, **Stephen Hunley's** sound entwines hints of blues, rock, jazz and soul with a contemporary edge to finish. Hunley's 2014 offering, **THE OTHER SIDE OF NEVER**, showcases a talent recognizably set apart by instinctive, artistic individuality. Signed by his unfeigned, distinct vocal tone and stylistic delivery, Hunley reveals a masterful forward-thinking musical conception weighted in "must-hear" lyrics and musical texture.

The Knoxville, TN native credits his early childhood "musical leaders" (Otis Redding, Paul McCartney and Elton John) for some of the learned behaviors in his artistry, but admits that most of his distinguishing qualities "just come out that way." Hunley's tone, dialect and inflections are a natural fiber in the fabric of his music.

Having grown up in Knoxville, I think people are surprised I can even speak the English language—there is this preconceived notion of what I am going to sound like before I even open my mouth. I don't really feel like I have just one influence; I listen to all kinds of different music and I'm just the "mesh" of it all. My phrasing is partially learned, but it's mostly organic in the way it comes out!

A natural poet, Hunley seemingly gravitates toward abstract lyrical expression. It is with this understanding that Hunley challenged himself to hone in and fuse some of Nashville's "more logical" writing blueprints with his own intangible tendencies. The result: a proud assembly of songs that define Stephen Hunley as a standout raconteur.

My writing style isn't borrowed—I'm more afraid to imitate and be anything but sincere. Honesty resonates to me as a listener and a music enthusiast, and as an artist, I only know how to write and sing about what I honestly know—the good and the bad. I've come to appreciate and revere the path of each written song.

Recorded at the historic SoundShop Studios in Music City, **THE OTHER SIDE OF NEVER** is uniquely genuine to Stephen Hunley. Working closely with producer Burton Akers and the legendary Billy Sherrill, the project was recorded in an "out-of-the-box" analog process.

We recorded the old-fashioned way to capture a "real human feel"—limiting manipulation and digital correction. We produced "to the song" rather than "turning it into something it's not born to be." . . .and because I don't "sit" on notes (my vocals aren't spot-on or dead center), it just seemed to be a more meaningful method to make the recording true."

“Stephen is a real pro and he’s a perfectionist as a composer; the stuff he comes up with is right on the mark,” introduces producer **Burton Akers**. *“He knows where he wants the music to go, but is open to input and collaboration in the studio. His musical maturity continues to surprise and impress me each and every time we work together. Stephen’s style travels from funk to rock, to a groove feel bonded by a cohesive thread that runs throughout. Not every vocalist can pull that off and make it ‘work’.”*

Evident in the contemplative storylines accompanied by the simply brilliant arrangements in *“Something Is Wrong”* and *“Oklahoma”* matched by traces of the Beale Streeters and the 70s soul-era in *“Call Me Baby”* and *“Speakeasy,”* **THE OTHER SIDE OF NEVER** is a true testament to Hunley’s musical sophistication, taste and effervescence. The tracks reveal chapters of his life and as he touches on the difficult recollections, he’s not pointing out imperfections nor being controversial in dispute, but merely painting an image based on his newfound perspective.

In the fraught *“Pictures In Her Mind,”* Hunley touches on a taboo social issue all too familiar...

She searches for a harbor,
searches for relief
But there’s no sign of redemption
and no sign of peace
She’s alone in an open field
in a pouring rain
She slides into another pill
just to hide the pain

As difficult as it was to endure, if I had not been a witness to addiction I would not have the clarity and understanding that I have today. My experience has opened my mind to what could have been a narrow-minded perspective. Addiction affects everyone, not just the person battling with the illness.

While **THE OTHER SIDE OF NEVER** features heavy heart subject matter, the album alternatively reveals a frolicsome Stephen Hunley with “easy on the ears” tracks such as *“Love You In The Dark,”* *“Elizabeth”* and *“The Other Side Of Never.”* Hunley embodies the ability to transport the listener from an array of emotions within one musical vehicle.

We only use twelve notes in the Western world of music, so you can only be so “original.” I hope people hear something recognizable, but with original flair.

Stephen’s creative thirst comes from the Hunley family vine. Much of Stephen’s musical character (particularly his phrasing) stems from growing up in the company of his uncle—the renowned country music vocalist Con Hunley (*“Oh Girl”/ “You’ve Still Got A Place In My Heart”*). Stephen recorded in the very same studio that delivered some of Uncle Con’s greatest hits with Aunt Ruthie and Uncle Kenny singing background vocals with Uncle Burton Akers lending his talents not only as producer, but on bass, guitar and keys.

“Stephen was a music lover as a child. He had three favorite songs and would walk around the house belting out Ronnie Milsap’s ‘Stranger In My House,’ the Dukes Of Hazard theme song and the Kraft Macaroni & Cheese jingle,” Aunt Ruthie Akers recalls. *“Those became his ‘must-hear’ bedtime lullabies before he’d close his eyes at night! Music is just in his soul.”*

I fell asleep with this little medley in my head every night. . .

I'm a good ol' boy
You know my momma loves me
When momma wants to please me
she's only got to cheese me!
[But..]
There's a stranger in my house
[And now...]
I got the blues.

A young man with a playful heart, Stephen Hunley doesn't appear to take himself too seriously; Stephen Hunley's **THE OTHER SIDE OF NEVER**, on the other hand, is serious business. Open for interpretation...it's a soulful, razzle dazzle, supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, finger-snappin', good-feelin', perplexing, contemplative, mystifying and wondrous piece of work that will make Hunley resonate with a vast audience in musical moments unique to each and every listener.

As an artist, it is easy to go down a path that others have gone down before. Setting fear aside, this album reflects my "just dive-in" life philosophy. It takes courage to be honest to your individual creativity to craft music with heart and integrity and I think this new album is a true expression of my vision. Taking the first leap of faith can determine a new path...and when that journey unfolds, it leads life to "the other side of never..."