

Interview: Local Band whitewolfsonicprincess Releases ‘The Alternate Boot’ on Jan. 8, 2019

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 7, 2019 - 4:12pm

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CHICAGO – The album premiere is a cause for celebration, and the local Chicagoland band whitewolfsonicprincess (wwsp) is debuting their third album, a double set release called “The Alternate Boot Vols. 1 & 2” on January 8th, 2019. For more on the album release and all things wwsp, [click here](#). [20]

The band began in 2006 out of a theater project anchored by lead singer Carla Hayden and guitarist/singer James Moeller, who have been together as partners and collaborators since meeting as teenagers in the 1970s. The band has evolved since it began, adding more instrumentation to their signature sound, but at the core are the songs written by Hayden and Moeller, and to travel with whitewolfsonicprincess in “The Alternate Boot” is to float in a dream and destiny of magical thinking, ethereal musicality and images of promise... and we all arrive together.



Carla Hayden (front) and James Moeller (right) of whitewolfsonicprincess

Photo credit: whitewolfsonicprincess.com

The current line-up of wwsp is Carla Hayden (vocals, percussion), James Moeller (guitar, vocals), Chuck Wasserburg (electric guitar), Ian Ogdon (bass), Randy Farr (percussion), Steve Rutstein (drums) and Nura A. (violin). HollywoodChicago.com interviewed Hayden and Moeller in anticipation of the album release.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is the origin of wwsp, and what is reflective of the band’s evolution in this double album set?

James Moeller: The band was birthed out of our theater group Black Forest. We started incorporating music into our theater work, and we were inspired by, and attracted to, the process of creating music, which then led us to forming a band. The music & the band have grown organically over the years, morphing and expanding. It’s been a crooked path.

We started as a duo, and we are now a full seven piece band. The new album encompasses years of songwriting, multiple rhythm sections, lots of great musicians... an amazing collection of souls. ‘The Alternate Boot’ is a 2 CD set, with 14 songs, an expansive set of music. We think each disc has a different vibe... Vol.1 is what we are calling our ‘alt-country vibe,’ and Vol. 2 is more of a ‘psychedelic folk-rock’ vibe. I mean, it’s all us, but certain songs hang together thematically and musically.

Carla Hayden: The band came out of theatrical play. What this album reflects is the culmination of where we began when we started really honing in on songwriting, to where that journey has led us – in the past and the present – and the songs that came alive through this latest incarnation of the band.

HollywoodChicago.com: You have songs on the album that were written years ago – ‘Song for Natalie,’ for example – and more recently. How do you feel they all co-exist thematically on the album despite the years between the songs?

Moeller: ‘Song For Natalie’ goes way back to a play that we performed called ‘Elston Gunn is Banished from Eden,’ loosely based on the film director Nicholas Ray. Carla wrote ‘Song For Natalie’ in tribute to Natalie Wood. We think it’s one of our best songs, but we never found a suitable place for it. That led to the ‘double Vol.’ idea.

We labor over song order. What songs go together? Which songs best work best next to each other, how to create a story, a vibe, a sound? What holds together as one fully-realized piece? Plus there are a handful of songs that came late in the process... ‘So Clear,’ ‘They Don’t Really Know,’ ‘Hand in Hand,’ ‘Brown Eyes,’ ‘Dance A Wave’ ... they reflect where we are now, and they feature the latest lineup of musicians. The band helped us create some unique and driving grooves.

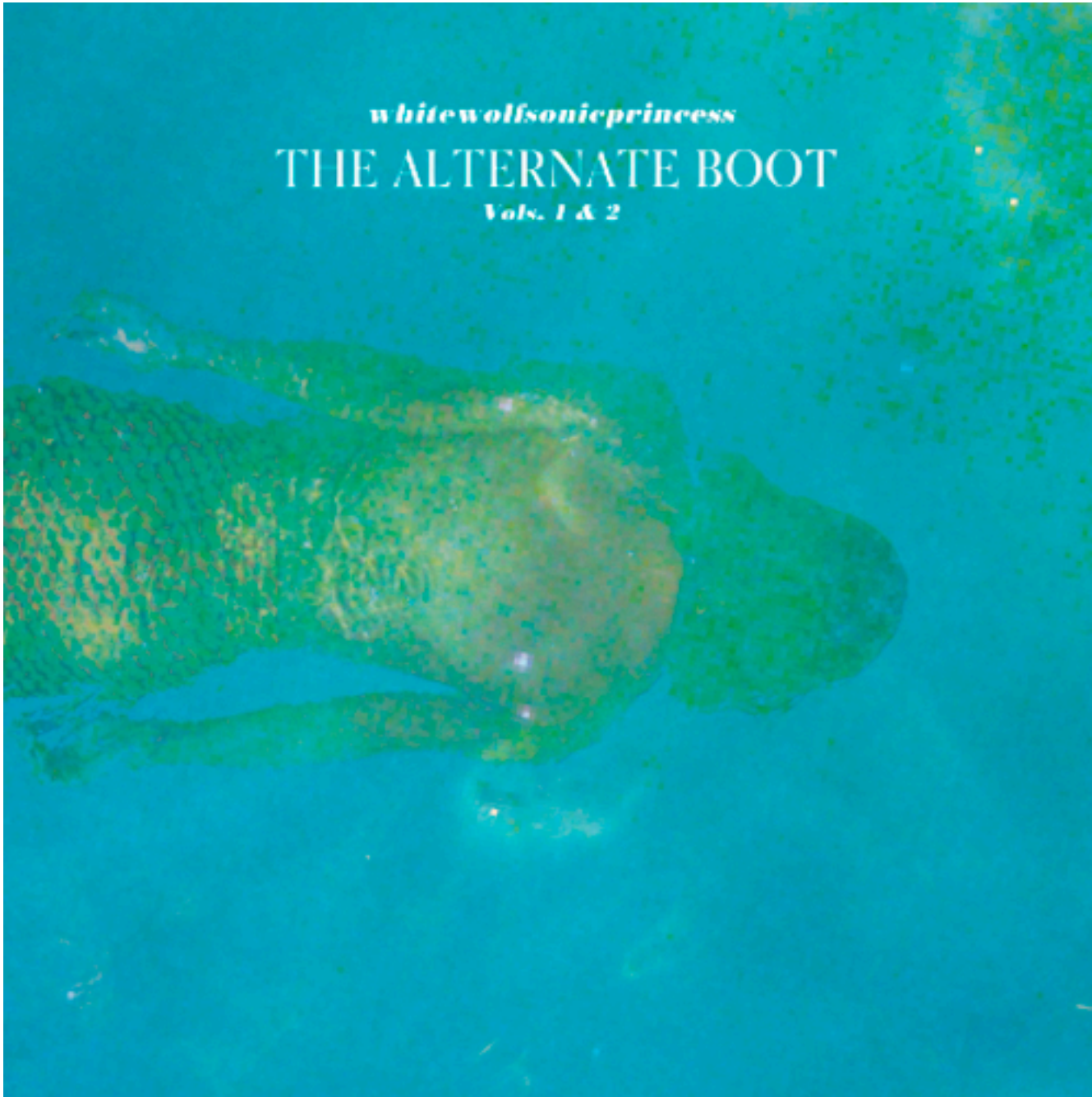
Hayden: Most of the songs for Vol. 1 were songs from the past that we brought to light because, they worked so nicely with ‘Song For Natalie,’ they had the same feel, and we wanted ‘Song For Natalie’ to find its place on this project. There is an ease about the songs on Vol. 1 that is different from Vol. 2, but are still very much a part of our vision. And we do feel that they co-exist and reflect off of each other. The forms of some of the songs are quite different, but many of the themes run through both Volumes.

HollywoodChicago.com: You have more than one song on these three themes – eyes, hands and water – what is it about these three elements in your worldview that makes them come up in different song forms?

Hayden: Seeing the world and touching the world and how it is so illusory. The cover art is the watery part of matter, in a way. It’s the water merged with the universe, the flesh merged with the universe, what you see and touch is so elusive.

When I think of the song ‘Hand of Grace,’ it is about seeing an event in the world, translating that event and interpreting that event as pure grace. The vision itself is poetic, a vision of an event, a moment in time, that is grace. Water is also meaningful to me, the water imagery is mysterious, it reflects the loss of my sister, many of the songs were created out of that loss.

Moeller: Water is definitely a major element on this record. Check out the cover art. Makes me think of another realm, another reality. A deeper consciousness. A realm of mystery, dreamy, reflective, enveloping. Drowning in the things of the world. And how to take it all in? With our eyes, hands, heads. Be awake and aware of the world, dive in, swim in it and reflect it back. That’s the artistic method, right? How do we make it in this crazy, over-stuffed world? Sink in deep, and reflect.



'The Alternate Boot Vol. 1 & 2' by whitewolfsonicprincess

Photo credit: whitewolfsonicprincess.com

HollywoodChicago.com: Although Carla is the lead vocalist on the bulk of the songs, James has been contributing lead vocals as well. In the songwriting process, what determines who will sing what song, and how does who sings the song add to the atmosphere of what the song is communicating?

Moeller: It's pretty simple. We each write lyrics. I come up with a riff or chord progression, and the songs kind of emerge from there. We collaborate on everything, we bounce ideas off of each other, suggest edits, or changes, but if Carla comes up with a lyric, she will sing it. And it's the same for me. So if you hear one of us singing lead on a song, it's because we wrote that particular lyric.

There are some great exceptions, for instance on 'I Close My Eyes,' Carla wrote the verses and I wrote the chorus. That's a perfect collaborative blend. We feel strongly about having two voices in the band. Male & female. Yin/Yang. Two voices. Two sensibilities. So we often find ways to sing together. How best to support the song and each other? It's the strength and beauty of collaboration. Two of us. Add in the band, and there's seven of us. All contributing to this big, expansive energy.

HollywoodChicago.com: You've both had a relationship of living together and creativity for many years. As you made the transition to a music project, how did it shift the dynamic of that relationship, that perhaps surprised you over and above what you knew?

Hayden: I would say for me, because I am a visual artist, being able to translate words into visual imagery, which then found its way into a song has been very rewarding. Those guitar strings... something about the way he makes them sound... he does drive me crazy, but that's wasn't a surprise, the surprising thing is how fully merged two beings can become, or how all seven of us can completely lose ourselves in the moment. There's also a push and pull, a tug of war, how to knock something together so it becomes one thing.

There's a process, a method, a magnetic thing, that finally merges on an atomic level or something. There's frustration and fun and joy and pissed off-ness. The opposition before the electrons flip over and merge. You can get into that same place like in acting where you lose yourself, become one thing and not separate things. That makes you forget everything else. The chores, the day to day... the minutiae of life.

Moeller: The music, the band, the creative journey, it's the best of us. It brings us together, working on something beyond us. It's a powerful bond. We have grown together, surprised each other, challenged each other. We inspire each other, and keep each other honest.

We come to it as equals. Drop the ego. Once in awhile we do butt heads, but that's part of the process, it's the good work. Can't imagine living without it. It's an intimate collaboration, which then becomes this bigger thing beyond us. Doing the work. Sharing the dream. Always trying to do the best that we can. Always ready to create, to play.

HollywoodChicago.com: Finally, you begin your live shows by striking a gong to create an atmosphere. How did that tradition begin, and what kind of vibe does it create before your live act?

Hayden: It's actually a Tibetan singing bowl. I started ringing it for peace, because I felt so helpless in the world, and I wanted to just have a

moment where you could send a peaceful sign out over the world. Now I feel we need to ring the bell for peace and love. What it also does is really brings focus, not only the band' performance, but the for the audience too. It's a unifying moment. Everyone wants it, everyone can relate to it. Everyone can relate to the simplicity and hope for peace and love.

“The Alternate Boot Vols. 1 & 2” by whitewolfsonicprincess will be released on Tuesday, January 8th, 2019, on all major digital platforms and Bandcamp, as well as available on CD through the wwsp website and Vintage Vinyl, 925 Davis Street, Evanston (Illinois). Upcoming live shows include January 26th at the Ice House Gallery, 609 South Boulevard, Evanston, and the Album Release Party on February 9th at Jarvis Square Potter, 1443 West Jarvis Avenue, Chicago. Visit the website for more details and to order past albums.



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