



Dean & Aimee. Photo: David Field

Creative Coupling: Aimee Volkovsky & Dean Stanton

By Megan Spencer (c) 2014

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The first time Bendigo artists and musicians Aimee Volkovsky and Dean Stanton sang together, it wasn't on a stage. It was holed up in a motel room in Young, NSW, after being unceremoniously beached by their car.

“We were stranded with an exploded radiator, and stuck for five nights,” explains Aimee.

To pass the time and “stay sane”, the couple sang one of the songs they'd been listening to during their road trip: Gordon Lightfoot's plaintive 1970 ballad, 'If You Could Read My Mind'.

They sang it “pretty much on repeat” while Aimee built a miniature paper city out of old magazines. “I spent \$20 on LED lights to make it look real,” Dean says, cackling. “Then we left it in the closet for the next guests to find!”

Aimee laughs, also reliving the episode in vivid colour. “I wouldn't let him build anything but he took photos! It ended up being a really good collaboration.”

The next opportunity to sing this very sad 'love gone wrong' song together *was* in public and on a stage, ironically on Valentine's Day this year, in the basement bar of the Goldmines Hotel.

That perseverant 2013 'motel hell' rehearsal paid off; Dean and Aimee's voices intertwined with such heartfelt melody and effortless harmony there wasn't a dry eye in the house. It was an uber-cool, slightly off-kilter duet delivered by a highly talented, charismatic creative couple.

Originally from western NSW mining country, Aimee found her way to Bendigo in 2011 while working at ABC radio as a journalist/presenter. She's now across various radio networks, splitting her time between Melbourne and Bendigo. “I'm a nomad of the airwaves,” she smiles.

With her gorgeous “sea spray green” Ibanez guitar and versatile voice, Aimee also cuts a powerful 'Lynchian' figure out front of her moody rock band The Molotovs, gigging regularly in Melbourne and at the odd regional music festival.

Teaching herself guitar “from the internet” and boosted by a large, expressive family, Aimee credits them with her love of creativity. “Music’s always been there. I grew up in a culture of family concerts and variety shows, singing three-part harmonies with my sisters.”

“Aimee’s family were ahead of their time,” admires Dean. “Her mum and her [mum’s] sisters were singing in moustaches *way* before Eurovision.

While a sweetly-sad song about divorce might have staved off boredom that lost week in Young, music also brought the couple together in Bendigo. They met at another basement venue where Dean – a youth worker with St. Luke’s and one of Bendigo’s most active artists and innovators - hosted ‘open mic’ nights.

An Eaglehawk native, at eighteen Dean travelled north on a “gigantic gypsy journey”, living in Brisbane and the northern rivers region of NSW before “the universe nudged [him] back to Bendigo” in 2007. Continuing to “always” play music, by then he’d racked up some serious busking prowess.

“Busking is awesome – it’s a survival skill,” he impresses. “It’s like collecting nuts and berries for the day”.

“Dean went to our holiday in New Zealand on busking,” says Aimee. “I earned the money the boring way!”

A multi-skilled musician, Dean tells of being part of many local musical line-ups (Crusty Barnacles, Grand Perceptor), first drumming as “a little munchkin” around town in his brothers’ cover band.

“They’d make me do 15 minute drum solos so they could earn a slab at the end of the night. I’d be exhausted and tucked into bed, while they’d go out and get drunk!” he laughs.

A creative force to be reckoned with, Dean’s fortitude lies in his uncanny ability – and need - for experimentation and innovation. It’s what underpins his practice.

He founded the International Junk Orchestra, “a symphonic orchestra that only uses instruments you make yourself from junk materials”. He regularly participates in exploratory music events and festivals like Undue Noise, Bendigo International Festival of Exploratory Music and True North Arts



Aimee & Dean on stage. Photo: Megan Spencer

Festival in Melbourne, where he exhibited “circuit bent noise machine” sound sculptures.

In May Dean also launched ‘[Stanton’s Original Floating Cymbal](#)’, an ingenious parlour “game of skill and luck” that uses recycled speaker innards and bottle tops. Taking eight years to develop the ‘World’s Greatest Magnetic Table Top Sport’, the start up is online and getting noticed.



Stanton's Original Floating Cymbal

While working on their respective projects, Aimee and Dean also collaborate – and give each other much-needed feedback. “We can get caught up in each other’s worlds and get excited about each other’s projects,” reflects Aimee. “We have different styles but share similar ideas about what works and appreciate each other’s perspectives well.”

“Aimee gets so interested and excited in just a little piece of junk – genuinely excited!” Dean smiles. “I’ve never felt so supported and understood as to where [my ideas have] come from.”

“We fuel each other’s creative world... It’s pretty super amazing.”

More about Aimee Volkovsky & The Molotovs on [Facebook](#)

Find out more about Stanton’s Floating Cymbal [here](#).

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