

# PENCIL STORM

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## CATCHING UP WITH JEREMY PORTER - BY COLIN GAWEL

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Jeremy Porter is a regular contributor to Pencilstorm. He is also an accomplished musician who records and tours with both his band the Tucos and solo. Since he is usually the one usually doing the interviews, we thought it would be fun to turn the tables and ask him some questions about his latest release, EP 1987. - Colin G.

### **1) So where did the inspiration for your new solo EP 1987 come from?**

Hey Colin! Well, we had a lineup change in the Tucos over the holidays, with Patrick out on bass and Bob Moulton coming in. We've done just a couple shows (including Bob's first show with us, in Columbus with the Bowlers in January) and have been hyper-focused on new material for a new record. As is my normal process, I write way more songs than we'll need, and a lot of the leftovers are throwaways, but some are decent songs that just don't really have a place with the new Tucos material. So with The Tucos being off the road and nothing new coming out in the near future, a few songs without a home, and an itch to get out on the road, I decided to throw it together quickly and get it out. GTG Records said "hell yeah," in their usual super-supportive way, and there we have it.

### **2) How is it different than recording with the Tucos?**

It's completely different. I engineered it myself in my basement, and had only myself to look to for quality control. That's not necessarily a good thing, but it sure is liberating and convenient. I asked Gabriel to mix it, not only because he's talented and has a great ear, but because he knows what I am after and he'll (hopefully) let me know if something sucks. The Tucos, on the other hand, take a much more labored, deliberate approach. We work the hell out of the songs to varying degrees, then demo them in the basement, then record them properly at The Loft with Tim and/or Andy Patalan. There's a lot of collaboration between the band and with the Patalans, and it takes a lot longer. They're both good approaches - each has its pros and cons - but they are very different.

### **3) It is definitely more stripped down than your recent recordings at The Loft, was this the plan all along or did it just happen organically?**

It was the plan. All at once I had a bunch of solo shows booked - some Michigan dates with NP Presley and The Ghost of Jesse Garon, a farm show down in Kentucky, shows in Ohio and West Virginia. When I realized I

had the songs, and I had the shows, I had a very short window to record-mix-master-manufacture & release. It had to be stripped down. But the material calls for that anyway.

#### **4) Where did that cover photo come from?**

That's me sitting in the back of my dad's Toyota pickup truck in the Marquette Senior High School parking lot in the spring of 1987, leading into graduation. Tim Demarte, one of my best friends, always had a camera handy. I was smoking a cigarette and we were probably trying to figure out where we were going to go get high. I'm wearing a Milwaukee Zoo t-shirt I bought at the zoo the same day we saw Hüsker Dü down there not long before that photo. I look pretty pissed off. I was probably thinking, "I better look cool, this might end up on an album cover someday."

#### **5) You recently covered "Christmas in Washington" by Steve Earle and I can detect some of his influence on the new EP. Did recording that song open a new creative door for you ?**

Yeah, it seems every year either The Tucos or myself solo are doing a song for a holidays comp. We've got a handful and keep wanting to release a Christmas EP and one of these years it's gonna happen. I always prefer to record and play with The Tucos over solo, but the Steve Earle song came together because we were in the middle of the Patty-to-Bob change in the Tucos and I needed it quick, and I'd wanted to do it for awhile. The only door it really opened is that I played slide on it, and I've been getting a lot more into that. I've been playing lap steel for a couple years now, but this is just slide guitar. Well, Joe Walsh I ain't by a mile, but there'll be a little slide on the next Tucos record and hopefully in the live set too.

#### **6) As usual, all the guitars sound amazing. Tell me a little about Reverend guitars?**

Thanks, man! Reverend guitars was started by Joe Naylor and is basically run by Ken Haas, a guy I've known for 30 years, played a million punk and other shows with, and we remain good friends. It was a Michigan company for a long time but they moved to Ohio, just outside of Toledo a couple years back. They make an affordable line of guitars that for my money stand up to just about anything out there on the market. I can't fawn over them enough. I've been playing a couple of the Pete Anderson signature hollow-bodies for years. To be honest, I've been trying for the last couple to put them down - just purely for the sake of mixing it up a bit. I've got a lot of guitars and most of them don't get played until we record. I took the Tele to the UK last year, I've got some Gibsons I've brought out, but I keep going back to the Reverends. They stay in tune, they keep their intonation, they sound and play amazing, even after bouncing around the back of the van for long runs. I'm addicted. I need help! I'm honored to be one of their "Featured Artists" but this isn't a commercial - they make a great instrument!

#### **7) Between all your music, touring and writing it seems you always have something going on. What is the secret to your productivity? Yoga? Trucker speed? Do tell.**

Man, that's a good question. I have a lot going for me, for starters. I have a really supportive wife, a demanding but flexible job, no kids, and bandmates that are all-in and can almost keep up. A few things have happened in the last decade that have put things in perspective for me: previous band breakups, getting older, health things, people dying, and I just have this feeling like I'm on the clock and don't want to waste another minute. There's certainly some OCD at play in there too. I just can't be idle. I go nuts and get depressed.

Another factor is that I am just resigned to being perpetually exhausted. It's not that I have endless energy, I just think that going to or playing shows is more important than a good night's sleep or being tired at work

the next day. You'll rebound, you can always catch up on sleep, but if you miss seeing Ex Hex, you're going to regret it forever! People get so wrapped up in getting enough rest and watching TV and staring at their phones that they never go out. I enjoy that stuff too, but I'm not ready to do it seven nights a week yet.

**8) I assume you will be hitting the road for some shows. Will you be playing more solo dates or will the Tucos be coming along too?**

I just wrapped up a couple runs of solo shows. I've got my EP release show next weekend with Shane Sweeney and Todd May coming through Detroit to play that with me (look for a Pencilstorm article later this week!). The Tucos have a couple shows coming up, then we're gonna spend the rest of the summer finishing the writing of the next record. In September and October we'll hit the road hard, break in all of the new material, get some good miles in, then come back and start the record right off the road before the holidays.

**9) What's up with your book *Rock And Roll Restrooms - A Photographic Memoir*?**

I've got another small batch of prototypes printed up and they're at the merch table and the shows these days. Still looking for a publisher who can help me get it out there at an affordable price and in greater numbers, but it's all me at the moment. I'm pretty wrapped up in making music and don't have the time to really shop it, so I just try to keep it in conversation when I can. One day I hope someone will help get it out there. The owner of Howard's Club H in Bowling Green recently had the cover framed for the bar - that's their bathroom on the cover. I can't wait to get back there to see it! Meanwhile you can follow me on Instagram @onetogive and #rockandrollrestrooms to keep up on all the great cans in the dive-bar circuit.

**10) Final question, you have played so many different places, what are a couple of your favorite places to perform outside the USA?**

We toured the UK last fall and had a couple great shows - London, Workington, and Ilfracombe come to mind. I love Montreal. We play a super-fun show up there every September for my pal Eric who does a charity golf tournament, and we play the draft/kickoff show. The theme is Hungover Golf. We don't golf, but we contribute to the hangover. London, Ontario has been fun the couple times we've played there - lots of good people.

Domestically, Lexington, Kentucky is wonderful. I have so many good friends down there who are really supportive. It gets crazy in the best way and it's super-positive. Huntington, West Virginia has been great the last couple years. Detroit is great as long as we spread it out. In Ohio our best city is probably Dayton. We love Columbus, tons of friends and so much great music out of there, but it hasn't been our best city. We need to keep working on that, man!!!