

Saxophonist Bancroft's new groundbreaking album

East Lothian-based saxophonist Phil Bancroft releases Finding Hope (When All Seems Lost), the debut album by his new trio, Beautiful Storm, on his Myriad Streams platform on Monday 16 December.

Featuring Bancroft's long-time colleague, the consistently inventive guitarist Graeme Stephen and the Delhi-based tabla master Gyan Singh, the new group explores a range of musical influences including traditional Indian raga forms, Celtic-accented melodies and rhythms and improvisation from within and outside the jazz tradition.

Bancroft has been a major figure on the Scottish music scene for over 30 years. He emerged in the late 1980's as saxophonist and main composer for the John Rae Collective before forging a reputation in influential Scottish bands including Celtic Feet, the award-winning Trio AAB, Colin Steele's Stramash, and the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra. He has since performed with musicians from across the pop, jazz, classical, Celtic and world music scenes and is featured soloist with the Grit Orchestra as well as leading his own groups.

"This album breaks new ground for me, in multiple ways," says Bancroft. "It comes at the end of fourteen years of study with a new approach to learning and practising, opening up a whole new concept of rhythmic structure, a new approach to

composition and improvisation. This is the first album to present these findings to the world.”

The album is also the first to be recorded in a barn at Bancroft’s home and the first to be mixed in his new home studio.

Originally intending to call the album Hungry Star, Bancroft had a change of mind during post-production when an untitled improvisation suggested an alternative.

“This improvisation named itself Finding Hope because it told this story of confronting and wrestling with something, and culminating after many stages in believing, a deeply positive journey. So that track, for me, became Finding Hope (When All Seems Lost).”

As he worked on the album’s final mixes, its structure unexpectedly shifted and Finding Hope (When All Seems Lost) became the pivotal track.

“Suddenly, I realised maybe this has to be the title track,” says Bancroft. “Then the question was, ‘Can I call an album Finding Hope at such a difficult time in the world?’ and I concluded that I think I have to!”

The album, he emphasises, reflects his own journey, as an artist.

“I have no interest in trying to tell people what to think or feel about their lives or the state of the world,” he says. “I believe we have varied, individual, and deeply personal responses to music. For instance, I tell my son I that believe music can change the world, and that is why I make it. Ultimately, though, I hope this music provides a soundtrack for some listeners on their own journey to find their own truth.”

