

Dean Owens releases new album – Spirit Ridge

Spirit Ridge is the follow up to Dean's critically acclaimed collaborations with US Latin rock icons Calexico which resulted in two albums – Sinner's Shrine (2022) and El Tiradito (The Curse of Sinner's Shrine) (2023).

These albums evoked the wide panoramic landscapes of the south western US desert states.

The twelve songs on Spirit Ridge are a musical and lyrical development, both monumental and deeply personal, rooted in a liminal hinterland which connects the lush Italian hills, the US desert states and post industrial Scotland. The spirit of the lion tamer is rarely far away.

Preceded by three well received "taster" EPs (The Ridge Trilogy) released in the second half of last year, the full Spirit Ridge album is now ready to launch into the world in all its guitar driven, brass infused glory! A magical mix of Dean's trademark melancholy and unforgettable melodies, a masterpiece of concise songwriting about family and connections to places, with a nod to spirit animals. Vocally he has never sounded better. Spirit Ridge begins quietly with Dean's tribute to the area around Crinale with Eden Is Here, before picking up pace with instrumental Spirito with its swelling brass notes. My Beloved Hills and Light This World

continue the theme of the importance of family and the healing power of special landscapes. There's a change of perspective with the soaring *The Buzzard And the Crow*, imagining the world seen from the birds' viewpoint, with a celebration of the stoicism of the buffalo in *Face The Storm (The Buffalo)*.

Dean returns to a frequent theme – the plight of the dispossessed and displaced – in *Burn It All*, and takes a dark turn for *Sinner Of Sinners* – a dark tale about a dark soul. *Wall Of Death* is a standout track – again, with a big production, a surprisingly upbeat song about living with “the black dog”. There's a more melancholy mood with *A Divine Tragedy* about the aftermath of a divorce, followed by the romantic ballad *Spirit Of Us* (one of Dean's oldest songs, given a new lease of life here). The final track, *Tame The Lion*, is a reflection on how the spirits of people long gone can still seem to walk with us in special places. Dean and Don Antonio were introduced by mutual friend John Convertino of Calexico who thought they'd be kindred spirits. He wasn't wrong.

Convertino guests on several tracks, on drums, marimba and vibraphone, with other Calexico musicians including Marttin Wenk and Tom Hagerman. The main band is comprised of Dean plus four talented Italian musicians including Don Antonio, with other notable guests including Scotland's Kirsten Adamson (daughter of Big Country/Skids' Stuart Adamson) on backing vocals.

Don Antonio is a renowned Italian producer, musician and film maker, whose work includes producing Alejandro Escovedo's *Echo Dancing* album (also recorded at Crinale), as well as his own projects including *Sacri Cuori*, known for their rich, atmospheric sound.

Dean said: “This album's for family. Those who are long gone, those who've recently passed on, those who are here right now and those whose spirits will be forever present

in our lives... all around us on Spirit Ridge.”

Don Antonio said: ‘I am Italian, Dean is Scottish, these are stories and sounds written and played in a way which deeply reflects who we are, the places we’ve been, the seeds we planted and the fruits we harvested. These songs are monumental.

