



# ALDORA BRITAIN RECORDS

The Underground and Independent Music e-Zine  
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"Tomorrow's Music Today"

## FEATURING

Portobello Express, TONG, Andy Bob Beaumont,  
Jostaberry, Sky Diving Penguins, Paul Inglis, Andy  
Salter, Deep Mud, Hoorsees, and Stan Matthews

Compiled and written by Tom Hilton

## Devils You Know

In Lexington, Kentucky, former Two Leg Dog member, John Kirkland, has begun a fresh and exciting chapter of his musical journey with a brand new band, **DEEP MUD**. The group is effectively the third incarnation of his long-standing, blues-based collaboration with drummer Danny Kelly. This time, they have also incorporated the bass-playing prowess of Korey Morris. The band hit the ground running in late 2021 with the release of their debut EP, entitled *Drown Me*. The set included four original compositions that really dug deep with their bluesy core. 'Driving rhythms, growling guitar, and sturdy baselines that shake out those dirty blues'. Interestingly, the four tracks included have all been strong live pieces for several years. This solid foundation is well displayed in the final recordings. These are songs that are well-worn and worked to something close to perfection, all the while keeping their loose and free-flowing blues foundation. It is an exciting thing to hear, for sure. Following the release of this debut EP, John Kirkland sat down with *Aldora Britain Records* to discuss the road that led to this current version of the band.

*Deep Mud* have previously contributed their track 'Cold Year' to our 'Dear Rowdy' compilation. Listen and download [HERE](#).

**Aldora Britain Records:** Hello John, how are you doing today? It is a true pleasure to be talking to a modern-day bluesman today. Thank you for your time. I want to start off before Deep Mud. What are some of your earliest musical memories and what first pushed you towards pursuing this passion of yours?

**John Kirkland:** Thanks for reaching out, Tom! Early in my life, music was relatively bland. AM radio and songs in school. At the age of eleven though, I went away to summer camp. A teenage counsellor



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there played ‘Stairway to Heaven’ on his little tape player one night. I was astonished and blown away. It was like my whole vision of reality was utterly shifted and transformed. I immediately set out to learn how to play guitar and largely taught myself listening to Led Zeppelin. I was truly obsessed. And for the next several years, I played several hours per day. By the time I reached high school I had become quite proficient and was exploring a variety of genres and techniques.



**Aldora Britain Records:** Many years later, you formed a brilliant band called Two Leg Dog. This was where we first encountered each other, and I still look back on those records very fondly. What are your memories from that time?

**John Kirkland:** Two Leg Dog was the second iteration of the collaboration with drummer Danny Kelly, who plays with Deep Mud now. Our first group, The Cryptomatics, had lost our bassist. Danny said that we were like a ‘two leg dog’ without a bass player. The name stuck. Even after we added Emrah Ozel on bass. In the Two Leg Dog years, the focus was writing new material and expanding the repertoire. We did that, releasing two

EPs along the way. The pandemic cut off our live performances, but figured into our EP *Distant Together*. Emrah moved on to pursue a PHD, and Danny and I were left to rebuild.

**Aldora Britain Records:** More recently, you have evolved into Deep Mud. How did this project come to be? What was the initial spark behind it all and where did you meet the other band members? There was a crossover between this band and Two Leg Dog.

**John Kirkland:** Danny and I wanted to continue what we had been working on, but were interested in possibly changing up the sound or approach a bit. We played with a few bassists and tried out a female singer for a while. We met Korey Morris, who had been playing with various bands around town, and his chemistry immediately worked with the group. Still deep in the pandemic, we spent months working on polishing previous material. We also wrote new songs and explored different moods and sounds. With no gigs, for anyone anywhere, we had the luxury of time to develop our sound.

**Aldora Britain Records:** With both projects, you explore a heavy modern blues sound. I love it! How would you say this sound came about, what would you say goes into it, and who are your biggest influences as an artist?

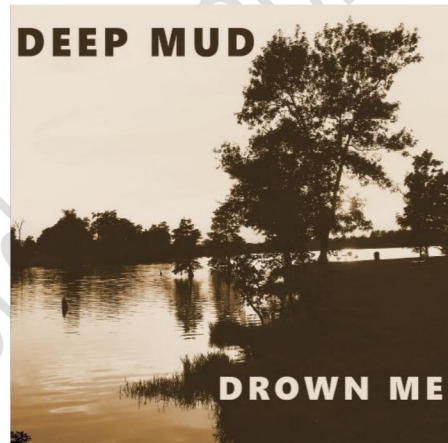
**John Kirkland:** I’ve always had an affinity for loud, nasty blues rock. The obvious first influences for me were Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix. Just from a pure guitar perspective. My guitar journey wasn’t a straight line though. In my teen years, I was listening to, and playing, a wide variety. From Metallica to Van Morrison, and Jimmy Buffet, Motley Crue and Van Halen too. In college, I discovered The Grateful Dead and Phish, and entered a years-long focus on jam band music. I spent three years in an original funk-jazz fusion act. Dived deep into jazz with Mingus, Miles, Coltrane and Herbie. Bluegrass and newgrass with Sam Rush and David Grisman. And finally, a deep study of ‘foundational’ blues

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with Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, and later blues, R.L. Burnside, North Mississippi Allstars. My influences are all over the place. My early years of playing guitar were all about skill, speed, and ‘making it sound right’. The middle years were all about absorbing and emoting music with deep feeling. My last decade or so had been about combining all the skill and experience with the emotion and sound within with the goal of producing music that speaks to me, and hopefully listeners as well. I don’t think I’ve fully hit it yet, but I’m working on it. I’ll always be working on it.

**Aldora Britain Records:** As Deep Mud, you have released a fantastic EP entitled *Drown Me*. A great debut! What are your memories from writing, recording and releasing this record, and how do you reflect on it as a whole now?

**John Kirkland:** Thanks. All four tracks were written years prior but were polished and reworked when Korey joined and we started Deep Mud. The title, *Drown Me*, comes from a lyric in the eponymous track ‘Deep Mud’. That track is from the perspective of a guy on the outs with his woman. Fed up with the drama and the bullshit. The lyric is ‘Oh baby, I can tread your water, but you drown me in your deep mud’. ‘Deep Mud’ has been our signature live song for years. ‘Sadie Brown’ is a song about a girl I knew from high school – not named Sadie! – who went down the sad rabbit hole of heroin use and vanished by the time we were twenty. Sad and alarming. ‘Devils You Know’ describes less than ideal situations in life. But don’t be too quick to exercise the devils you know only to invite in those you don’t know. Then, there’s ‘Cold Year’.



**Aldora Britain Records:** I think my own personal favourite has to be ‘Cold Year’, what a track! What is the story behind the song, is there anything in particular that inspired it, and what does it mean to you?

**John Kirkland:** Thanks! I originally started chipping away at that song probably twenty years ago. It was a relatively simple blues jam. Over the years, I added lyrics and focused the song to a more manageable length. The lyrical story is told from the perspective of coming off a painful experience, and charting the healing that comes with time. It has great ‘bones’ for hanging heavy blues riffs. Lyrically, I tried in ‘Cold Year’, like I do with many of my songs, to write universally, so the listener can apply their own interpretation. So, it could be about a breakup, the loss of a loved one, a terrible experience. The singer goes from despondent to realising everything’s going to be okay over the course of a year, a ‘cold’ year. I like the song. I think it pushed the right buttons, both musically and personally. It’s heartening to hear that other people are enjoying it too.

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## Quickfire Round

**AB Records:** Favourite artist? **John:** Umm, difficult. Maybe Wilco, Zeppelin or Jack White.

**AB Records:** Favourite album? **John:** *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. A masterpiece that fires on every cylinder.

**AB Records:** First gig? **John:** Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton. I was young...

**AB Records:** Style icon? **John:** No, I'm not! I kid... but not really. My 'style' lexicon dried up and blew away decades ago.

**AB Records:** Favourite film? **John:** Also difficult, maybe *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

**AB Records:** Favourite up and coming artist? **John:** Mirrored Image are a pop group from the mountains of eastern Kentucky. Their sound, delivery and aesthetic are incredible with tremendous original writing and energy. Young powerpop isn't my go-to genre by any means. But I'm fully blown away by what these young guys are doing.

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*Turn over for Hoorsees...*