

Breeze Block

A fresh wave of post-punk musical ramblings has arrived on British shores via the genius of Glenn O'Halloran. With an array of musical collaborators, Glenn has unleashed the world of **DOGZEN ZENDOG** onto the public at large. In the last two years, this project has brought us 2021's mighty *Walking Quickly Standing Still* and 2022's fantastic *Petals Nails*. These are sets that give listeners a revealing insight into a seriously creative mind at play. Experimentation is a core element and compositions can veer from otherworldly post-rock to art-included dub and even electronic psychedelia all at the drop of a hat. It is a fascinating and appealing sonic palette, and one that will surely be explored further. Before the New Year, *Aldora Britain Records* had the opportunity to chat to Glenn about Dogzen Zendog and the mentality behind the music.

Dogzen Zendog have previously contributed their track 'Outbound (Berlin – Stockholm)' to our 'Dear Rowdy' compilation. Listen and download [HERE](#).

Aldora Britain Records: Hi Glenn, how are you? It is great to be talking to such a versatile and talented artist. I am a big fan! I was wondering if we could start off by taking a stroll back in time. What are some of your earliest musical memories and what first pushed you towards pursuing this passion of yours? Your experimental approach started with your family's tape recorder I believe.

Glenn O'Halloran: I was brought up in a music mad home. My oldest sister was into soul music, being a mod, so it was Motown and Stax. I had an older cousin who would bring really early ska and bluebeat records up from London. My older brothers were into psychedelic progressive music, but some Rolling Stones and Beatles too, of course. Even at an early age, I was listening to the more obscure sounds of



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The Rolling Stones. Besides ‘We Love You’, the sound of The Doors being mesmerizingly slammed on the stereo I remember vividly. The Beatles’ ‘Revolution #9’, I love it. Hendrix! A friend of my sister’s knew I was into the more obscure stuff, so I was probably ten when he brought a reel-to-reel of The Velvet Underground’s ‘Sister Ray’. That was probably 1968. From then on, I wanted to be in a band. I started to play around with the reel-to-reel somebody gave me, my younger brother had an acoustic guitar, and my older brothers were both in bands. So, when glam rock arrived, I was already listening to David Bowie, Lou Reed, and Iggy in The Stooges.

Aldora Britain Records: I would now like to talk about the late 70s if you don’t mind. An iconic era, for sure! Punk was on the move and the Rock Against Racism movement was developing. You were heavily involved at this time. Can you tell me about some of your memories of this period and how you reflect on it now?

Glenn O’Halloran: Rock Against Racism was a reaction to some really stupid things being said by one very famous guitar player about Birmingham and its multicultural vibe. It was the obvious thing to do. There were really bad things going on and racism towards our friends, some of whom were being attacked. I had people hiding in my flat because there were gangs who wanted to beat them up. So,



my little flat became a place where we organised, put on gigs, arranged to go to protests, and tried to make things better.

Aldora Britain Records: You have spent most of your life around Bletchley but have also spent time throughout Europe and Asia. I am very curious in how people's surroundings influence their music and I think there is something going on here. How would you say your travels have influenced your output? I think that contrast between a quiet town and the hustle and bustle of the world is reflected in the diversity of your output. Are there any specific artists you would say have influenced you?

Glenn O'Halloran: I've been fortunate to be able to travel over the years. I don't know if it's had an influence, I don't really analyse my music as such, it comes from a deep place. I've read other musicians and artists have the same kind of vibe when they try to analyse music they are making. When I try to analyse, I normally end up with rubbish. I think whenever you travel, you meet people that should affect you in all of your life, not just your musical life. When you see how hard it is for some people in the world, you can realise how fortunate you are, or some of us are, as individuals. When I'm not making music, I am actively involved in human rights work.

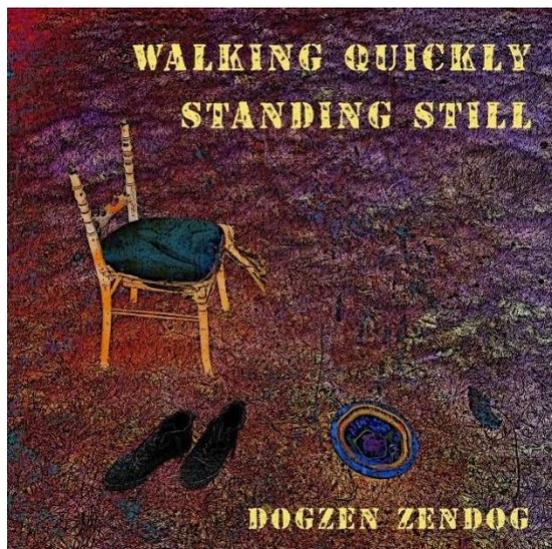
But getting back to the other part of your question, artists who have influenced me. I think of a list, but sometimes it's not the artist, it's part of an artist's repertoire that can influence me. So for example, Iggy Pop's *The Idiot* when it arrived in 1977, it really affected me. This strange music mesmerised me and still does to this day. There's a Bowie bootleg called *Leon Suits* which is about two hours of Bowie and the band kind of jamming out some brilliant stuff. There didn't seem to be any control in the studio, and I love that. I could go on... Captain Beefheart, Jon Hassell. I'll stop now before you get the list! Hang on, one more... John Cale for consistency. He brings out some brilliant music and has been there a long time. He's playing the Palladium in a few weeks and I can't wait.



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Aldora Britain Records: Today, you perform as Dogzen Zendog. How did this come about and what was the initial spark behind the project? Is it a collective mentality or more of an output for your brilliant songwriting?

Glenn O’Halloran: I’ve been working on some bits and pieces for years in the studio. I worked with a lot of bands over the years and even did stuff that I couldn’t put my soul into. I made a demo of about ten songs and contacted Blake. He said he was looking for potential material for his label Xenotone. It was quite brilliant; Blake flew over from New York and we met in central London. He shook my hand and offered me a deal. He also gave me a lot of freedom that you don’t normally get with labels. I didn’t have a name for the project at that time. I was sitting at my desk, and I drew a picture of a dog and wrote ‘Dogzen Zendog’. I showed it to my partner, Astrid, who is an artist, and I said what do you think. She then scribbled a logo. I mentioned it to Blake and he said go for it, so that’s how we got the name, there’s no meaning to it. But if people can find meaning, that’s great, I don’t care.



Aldora Britain Records: *Walking Quickly Standing Still* was my introduction to your music and it has certainly left an impression. You are clearly still going strong! What are your memories from writing and releasing this album? How do you find bringing this release together during the global pandemic?

Glenn O’Halloran: With the pandemic, I just got on with it. I lost friends to it early on. I had to work around restrictions as travelling to the studio in Harlem, New York was a no-no, but we worked differently and it was fine. I’m quite disciplined when working on music, I demo riffs and beats and I’ll put down the lyric very quickly. I don’t try to think too much about it. This was the process for *Walking*

Quickly Standing Still, I created characters and then sang stories about them or had the characters singing the song. I played most of the instruments with Blake adding double bass and cello, also some synth and programming. The opening track is called ‘Carlisle’ and was the last track to be recorded. I could get the band together in a studio and, therefore, I could fortunately have some great musicians. My older brother Joe is a great sax player, my brother Brent is a multi-instrumentalist with an ear for backing vocals, also the great Howard Lewis put some guitar down. I actually got him out of retirement to work on this track.

The current album, *Petals Nails*, was recorded on the rebound from the track ‘Carlisle’ with emphasis on how many vocals, sax solos, and great guitar work we could get. We have a superb classical violinist from Switzerland, Sophie, who plays on a couple of tracks. As with the previous album, we mixed it in the studio in Harlem, New York. I like to make albums as a body of music. The current record was even more focussed on the art of making an album. The track orders were decided very early on, so

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we knew what track was coming next. Our next untitled album is halfway through, the tracks are already in place and will probably be released in June 2023.

Aldora Britain Records: I would like to focus on ‘10K V2’. What is the story behind this song? How did it come together and what inspired it?

Glenn O’Halloran: Good question. As I say, I was working on some beats for a UK hip hop artist, and he had this track ‘10K’. I kind of wrote around this beat that I’d made for him. We have since had some copyright issues with the track, so the live set had a different version, but it is in our live set.

Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist? **Glenn:** John Cale... this week.

AB Records: Favourite album? **Glenn:** Bowie’s *Outside* this week.

AB Records: First gig? **Glenn:** I was fortunate as where we lived as kids there was a club called Esmerelda’s. The guy behind the club had good contacts in London, so a lot of the bands who were doing the London circuit would come up and try their new sets. So, from a really early age, I was seeing bands like Genesis, Mann, Stray, Status Quo, Black Sabbath. I’m trying to remember who was first, I think it was Arthur Brown’s Kingdom Come or a French avant garde progressive band Ange.

They were my first gigs, I was twelve or thirteen. I didn’t think it was anything special, I thought everybody had these bands playing at the end of their council estate!

AB Records: Style icon? **Glenn:** 90s Bowie, but it depends what’s on sale in the local charity shops.

AB Records: Favourite film? **Glenn:** Both *Blade Runner* films I love, the paradox human machine thing.

AB Records: Favourite up and coming artist? **Glenn:** Le SuperHomard, they have been going a couple of years I think, worth checking out. Coda Rushing also.

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