

Interview with Seinking Ships

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Hello Christopher, Eric, and Miki! I'm dead chuffed to be doing this interview with the three of you in support of your new Seinking Ships album *Museum Quality Capture* that set sail in June.

Christopher, you're based in the Cleveland, Ohio area, and Eric you are located in Oregon. How did you two cross paths and at what point did you decide to collaborate as Seinking Ships?

Christopher: I reached out to Eric back in '06 via his website to produce some songs I was working on. I was a fan of his work and knew Eric had done some producing on the side with other bands, so I asked. It started off with a few horns, bass, and beats but it got to the point where Eric had left such a mark on the songs that we decided to set sail as a "band".



Seinking Ships seems more like a musical project than a band, in the sense that I don't think you've played live under this name and don't live right around the corner from one another. During the whole creative process, was there any proximal interaction, like where you were both in the studio at the same time, or did this all come together via long-distance?

Eric: Yes, more of a project than a band. Then again, my last "band" never played live or toured either and I think most people regard Cardinal as a band. And yeah, here in the 21st century there is lots of music made by people who have never been in the same room. The changing music biz economy (shrinking budgets) and technology has made this a common way of working.



Christopher and Eric, it's quite a coup for you to have Miki Berenyi of the U.K., 1990s, dream-pop (for lack of a better description) band Lush as guest vocalist. Who is the more avid Lush fan between the two of you and what made you think of approaching Miki for your album?

Eric: I think Christopher is more familiar with that catalog. I was more of a casual fan but certain of their songs really caught my ear and I always loved Miki's voice. I was buying nearly everything on 4AD when I was in high school but in the early 90's I sort of started doing my own thing and stopped keeping up like I had.

Christopher: Yeah, I would agree I am more the avid Lush fan. They weren't an influence in my playing necessarily, but they just had an original amazing sound. I am thrilled having Miki involved in the album. It's really incredible.

I find it interesting that you have Miki singing on three of the album's tracks on an otherwise all-instrumental album. Did either (or both) of you consider taking on some vocal duties? What is the lure of creating an instrumental versus a vocalist-centric song?

Eric: Well, I sing on one of the songs, a backing thing, wordless but no lyrics. I don't think Christopher sings and I went out of my way to not be a lead vocalist on this record. If people want to hear me sing there are my solo records and Cardinal, etc... This was going to be a straight instrumental album and then I got the idea of making it more

appealing by having a familiar, hopefully known, female vocalist.

Who wrote the lyrics that Miki sings? Since Miki resides in England, how did you involve her in the creative process? Were you sending audio file drafts through email or via snail mail? The result is wonderful, but I'm wondering how you got to the final product.

Eric: I wrote all the lyrics and the melodies she sang, in her range, for her. We secured her interest in the project and I then wrote her parts specifically for her. I made demos here, with our tracks and me singing all the parts for Miki to learn. And again, totally remote. Miki knew an engineer (look for name on the CD) in London and we booked her in there and she just sang the stuff after rehearsing at home for about a month. Actually, we bought Miki an iPod and I loaded it with the demos and a karaoke version of the songs so she could listen on "The Tube".



Fan Photo - 1994



What types of instruments did you employ on *Museum Quality Capture*? Did you play any instruments or use any effects that you've never tried before?

Eric: Christopher plays most of the electric guitars and the fat synths. I sort of did the rest – guitars, bass, drums, brass, strings, piano, electric piano, melodica, etc... I don't think I tried anything new on this album but I certainly used instruments in ways I had not before. This music is very spacious and open to much experimentation, so I got to stretch out.

Christopher: I stuck with what I do best. The keys and the guitars. The keys (Korg Trinity) have so many sounds and effects, that you can do something new every time it's fired up. It's a beast of a machine.

I've always wondered how bands, including *Seinking Ships*, get that sustained, 'new-day dawning', spacey sound. I'm assuming it's from your Korg Trinity, Christopher, but how do you actually achieve this sound?

Christopher: Lots of reverb, delay, and tweaking of knobs. Mostly it comes from Trinity. I have around 20-30 sounds that are my bread and butter.

Christopher and Eric, Seinking Ships is not the first musical endeavor for either of you. Eric, as you mentioned earlier, you were one half of Cardinal in the 1990s and you've also released solo material on the venerable Sub Pop Records, including your debut *It's Heavy In Here*. From what I've read online, I think you have another album up your sleeve titled *Too Much World*. What's the latest about it?

Eric: Yeah, there was Cardinal and then the 5 solo records so far. *Too Much World* will be my 6th and it should be out by the end of the year. The album does have sort of a theme and the song with the name of the title is about my personally have consumed too much of this modern world and its ways. It's something I have been touching on in my songs in recent years – most notably a song called “We Were Human” from my last record *The Imagination Stage*.



Eric and Christopher as Seinking Ships

Christopher, you've been a fixture of the Cleveland and Akron, Ohio music scene, playing in the bands Rivethead, Liquid Garden, and Quaspace. What instruments did you play and what were your experiences like being in those bands?

Christopher: I played guitars/keys. Everyone I played with were great friends so we had a blast playing gigs and recording in the studio. We never landed any record contracts but we sure tried. It was a great experience.

Christopher, before you approached Eric to work with you as producer, and now member of Seinking Ships, was your intent to record a solo album? Would it have been in the same musical style as *Museum Quality Capture*?

Christopher: Yes and no. The plan was to record a solo record with help from friends and pros like Eric. I never had the desire to do an album on my own entirely.

Christopher and Eric, you released a self-titled EP in 2008 that contained four songs. Were you testing the waters before diving in and recording a whole album or did you know all along that you would be releasing a full-length? How did it compare recording the EP versus the album?

Eric: It was pretty much the same process. At first, this project was going to be a Chris Seink thing and I was just a hired performer and producer. After the EP went out, we decided to make it a band and do a full-length.

You both have professed a love of film soundtracks and 80s New Wave tunes. How do these interests figure into *Museum Quality Capture*?

Eric: For me it was about looking back to the moods of certain films and television shows and trying to help create a music that would have fit into that time and those projects. We have a song on this record called "Savalis Street". I was watching lots of *Kojak* at the time and I was writing that thing like a score to a chase scene. I love *Kojak*!

Christopher: I was probably more inspired by 80s New Wave tunes than film soundtracks. I think the tone of my music fits the cinematic theme. The type of keys and guitar sounds I produce have that retro feel and the fact that it is instrumental in nature seems to mesh well with film and TV soundtracks past and present.

Who are your most fave New Wave artists? I'm partial to a-ha (so much more than a 'one-hit-wonder' band!), Wham!, and Pet Shop Boys, and although I wasn't into Spandau Ballet at the time, I'm lovin' the song "Gold".

Eric: A-ha is one of my most important bands too. They are totally serious and heavy. For me, New Order, The Cure, The Church, The Smiths, Cocteau Twins, Kissing The Pink, Depeche Mode, Duran Duran, etc... There was so much good stuff then.

Christopher: I listened to New Order, The Cure, Cocteau Twins, Depeche Mode, Echo and the Bunnymen to name a short list.

What about your most fave movie soundtracks or film scores? I like the *Run, Lola, Run* and *A Single Man* soundtracks, and Ryuichi Sakamoto's work on *Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights*.

Eric: I am partial to the works of Bernard Herrmann, Jerry Goldsmith, and John Williams. Those are 3 of the dozens of guys I could discuss. But mostly, it's the 40's through 60's for me.

Christopher: I love the Lalo Schifrin's *Dirty Harry* soundtracks. Queen's *Flash Gordon* soundtrack first piqued my interest in soundtracks.



Eric and Christopher as Seinking Ships

Who is at the helm of the 'Ship', so to speak? Did you both have an equal say in the final recording or did you have to play 'rock, paper, scissors'? LOL

Eric: Well, I am the listed producer but I run everything I do by Christopher for his approval. I think I generally blow his mind but there were things here and there that he had me do again, or try differently. But no, it's not a dictatorship. Christopher starts all the songs so I always feel like he gets a good say throughout the rest of the process. He is most helpful at the mixing stage – a good second set of ears.

Eric, what travails did that entail, being the producer of *Museum Quality Capture*?

Eric: None really. I have been producing records for 17 years and Christopher is easy to work with. Overseeing the coordination of the London sessions was a little stressful, working with a remote producer and engineer from that studio – sorting out the file types between my studio and his. And then Paypal was giving us a hassle when trying to pay him... but no, it was good.

How did you hook up with S-Curve Records? The label has quite an eclectic and interesting artist roster, going from Tinted Windows to Tom Jones.

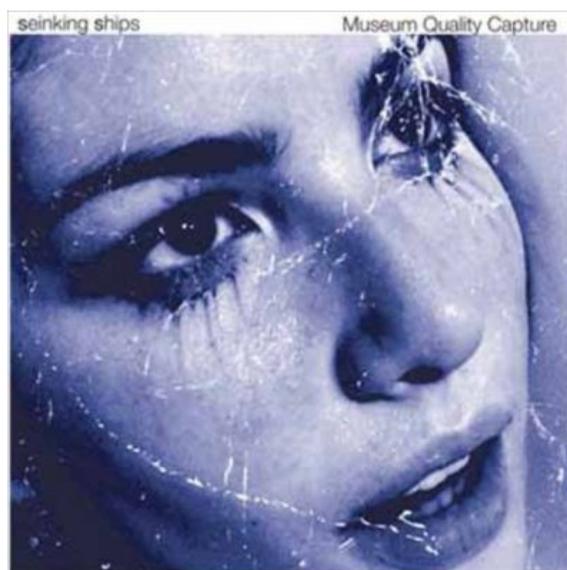
Eric: My long-time friend and some-time manager Jason Reynolds (an old-days Sub Pop staffer) knows the guys who run S-Curve. A few months ago word got out that they needed to sign a couple bands and get out quickly new albums in order to fulfill some missing quota regards to their contract with EMI. Well, Jason asked me if I had any records “laying around” that were finished. He knows I have a few projects and produce other good unsigned acts. Well, *MQC* seemed like a good pitch and hey, it worked. The guys at S-Curve love the record and they had known my work for a long time. I work with Andy Chase a lot, and with Adam Schlesinger from Tinted Windows when I worked with Ivy. Steve from S-Curve was instrumental in that first Ivy record. And James Iha – I worked with him on a couple of those Brookville records so I was a pretty natural fit to work with that label – lots of joining connections.

I'm curious about the meaning of the album title. It's all a bit mysterious, seeming to be hefty in meaning, but light on the tongue and calls to mind capturing wildlife to display in a museum. Am I totally off the mark with that interpretation?

Eric: Yes, off the mark a tad. It's about each of these musical works being like a snapshot or painting of various times and places, or representing a live artifact that has been captured (recorded) in just such a way that they depict very accurately a scene suitable for display in an art gallery.

The album artwork is a stunner – very cinematic, very dramatic – with the close-up of a young woman's face with her mascara starting to streak down her cheeks. From where did this image surface? Who is the model?

Eric: Thanks. The model is a young woman named Victoria Noll. She is a talented artist (music, drawing, painting, photography, etc). I know her from Facebook and for a time we were talking about me producing her record but instead we are just casual friends. I really like her photography and when this record came up, and we needed a finished art package done quickly I got the concept of just having her hand over some photos I liked. With Christopher and his friend Michael Galbincea my little fast concept turned out really well.



Fan Photo - 1994

Hello Miki! First off, I just want to say that I've been a fan of yours since the early days of Lush and even

interviewed you by letter in 1994 (my best music-related moment so far!).

Miki: Thanks!

After Lush disbanded in 1996 you had sporadic forays in the music field, with supporting vocals on a track by The Rentals and beguiling guest vocals on the song "Smile" by Flat7. What made you agree to work with Chris and Eric as Seinking Ships?

Miki: Eric just got in touch with me (I think he got my email off Simon Raymonde from Bella Union – ex-Cocteau Twins – or am I just imagining that?!) and asked me if I would sing some vocals. And I said pretty much yes so long as he wasn't in any great rush or had any huge expectations because family and work take up about 90% of my time and singing has largely been replaced with cigarettes. Oh, he also lured me with the promise of cash.

What did you make of the long-distance collaborative process? Was it something that you could fit easily into your 9-to-5 schedule or did you have to make time to lay down your vocals?

Miki: Nothing at all fits easily into my 9-5 schedule, least of all trekking up to Walthamstow to a dank studio and spending 12 hours trying to reach notes I struggled to scale 20 years ago. I think I had a cold, too, so I was probably on the Benylin.

What did Christopher and Eric send you to go on for creating your vocals? Did they send you the lyrics and completed song compositions or was it more piecemeal? Did you come up with any of the lyrics or melodies yourself?

Miki: Short of turning up at the studio and manually squeezing my voicebox, they pretty much did everything they could to shield me from any effort, so song, lyrics, melody everything was on tape for me to listen to and learn. They also went into overdrive tackling my natural self-loathing and complete lack of faith in anything I do. Which was nice of them.

Do you plan on getting involved in other music projects in the future? If a musician/band were to contact you now to contribute to their album, would you consider it?

Miki: No plans. Maybe if I was asked but it depends who and how drunk I am at the time.

I just have to ask, what is the latest info on Lush album reissues? Is there something definite in the works? Would it be through 4AD?

Miki: God alone knows. They took us to dinner about 2 years ago to discuss it but I've not heard anything since. Emma's probably the one to ask... She's a lot more organized about that stuff than me.

Have you seen the photos of Rihanna's new hair color? It looks vaguely familiar...LOL Do you still dye your hair pillar box red or have you gotten away from that? I've never had the nerve to go all-out and dye my hair like that.

Miki: I grew it out sometime around when my son was born. The concept of my face looking older than my hair suddenly became an issue. For some reason, I kept thinking of that dwarf at the end of *Don't Look Now*.

Lastly, what is the best way to purchase your album and find out more info about Seinking Ships?

Christopher: Visit our website <http://seinkingships.com/Live2/> and <http://www.myspace.com/seinkingships> to find out



more info.