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Bio information: **ALEC K. REDFEARN AND THE EYESORES**

Title: **SISTER DEATH** (Cuneiform Rune 344)

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FILE UNDER: ROCK / AVANT ROCK / VISIONARY AMERICANA / ART ROCK

"This is wonderful stuff – brave and experimental, yet warmly human. Make room on your folk revival shelf for something that may be influenced by folk, but is in no way a revival." – Splendid Magazine

"The melodies are ravishing throughout – sparse and simple, solemn and uplifting. ... Alec K. himself has a rich yet fragile voice, joined by equally delicious high female harmonies - classical voices with a hint of eccentric Americana. ... Soaked with genuine feeling and deep spirituality... there's extraordinary depth to this music... The melodies... promise hope and celebrate fragile humans despite the darkness. Haunting, compelling, quite unique..." – Organ Magazine

*"All Praise Be Yours, My Lord, Through Sister Death From Whose Embrace No Mortal Can Escape"
– Saint Francis of Assisi, from "Canticle of the Sun"*

Alec K. Redfearn and The Eyesores have been surprising audiences with their hypnotic, gently explosive rock music for more than a decade. Never one to follow trends, Redfearn's kaleidoscopic visions, anchored by his extraordinary accordion work and sonorous vocals, exist on the fringes of pop music, songs that are as familiar and individual as snowflakes or fingerprints. While his deep knowledge of folk, classical and world music allows him to slip effortlessly from genre to genre, more often, he creates pieces that subvert established forms to produce work of startling originality. Stomping Gypsy rhythms collide with Appalachian dirges, Kraut rock, modern minimalism, Irish fiddles, chiming German glockenspiels, and subtle multi-layered percussion, to suggest the soundtrack for a séance or a dark science fiction epic. By using an unusual mix of electric and acoustic instrumentation, including stand up bass, accordion, French horn, percussion, doumbek, organ, and electronics, The Eyesores subvert the conventions of pop music to create rock music that is at once truly *visionary*, and a genuinely *alternative Americana*.

Sister Death is Redfearn's most immediately accessible work, an album that draws people in without forsaking the musical and emotional complexity that makes his sound so compelling. Redfearn is blessed with an ability to compose music that doesn't fit easily into any known category, a farsighted artist able to push music in exciting new directions, while still remaining accessible. His accordion work is nothing short of astonishing, sounding one moment like a distortion drenched electric guitarist, the next like a mellow Balkan wedding musician. In an effort to describe Redfearn's sound, critics have compared him to artists as varied as **Bertolt Brecht, Erik Satie, Faust, Steve Reich, Richard Leo Johnson, Tom Waits, Harry Partch** and **The Velvet Underground**. Elements of those artists may resonate within his work, but they all fall short of conveying the unique and intimate beauty of his music. Redfearn's oblique lyrics are just as evocative; they illuminate the inner dance we all do when we're face to face with our most troubling emotions with an ironic humor that cuts to the heart of the human dilemma.

Sister Death, the 7th album by Alec K. Redfearn and the Eyesores, explores the mysteries of life, death, love, loss, creation, and destruction, subjects that have informed Redfearn's songwriting since the early 90s. "The title *Sister Death* is taken from **St. Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Sun**," Redfearn explains. "The full quote is 'All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape.' I first heard these lines chanted by nuns at my grandmother's wake in 2005. *Sister Death* evokes the image of a maternal, welcoming figure. Accepting the fact that everything has an end has been difficult for me, especially as I get older."

"I spent about six years writing this record and it's probably the most accessible release we've done, although my melodic obsessions and idiosyncrasies remain imbedded in the music. I spent a lot of time listening to kraut-rock, space rock and psychedelic rock for the past few years, so the songs have been built around accordion and keyboards. The biggest change in our sound is the addition of **Orion Rigel Dommissé** on the Acetone Top-5 Organ and vocals. She's insanely talented and has a unique singing voice."

Sister Death continues Redfearn's penchant for music that's profound, primeval and cinematic, with echoes of folk influenced melodies still drifting through the mix. "Unawake" brings to mind a Russian folk band playing an Irish lament. Redfearn's accordion dances with **Don Larson's** claw hammer banjo and the sprightly fiddles of **Jimmy** and **Hanna Devine**. Redfearn and Dommissé harmonize on a melody that makes the sinister lyrics sound almost playful. "Nothing can harm you if you create your own reality," Redfearn says, "but living in your own reality comes at a price." A single sustained note from an electric organ is the backdrop for the lyric of "Amplifier Hum," a peek into the bleak void of a loveless life. Dommissé and Redfearn's vocals have hints of Celtic and Arabic ornamentations. The instrumental "Black Ice" starts as a Baroque melody on accordion: Flamenco handclaps, skittering percussion, dramatic bass accents and desiccated banjo slowly transform the piece into a wild folk dance of indefinite origin. "Fire Shuffle" rides a mellow, bluesy keyboard rhythm supplied by Dommissé's organ and **Chris Turner's** harmonica. Halfway through the song, all hell breaks loose with an extended accordion solo from Redfearn that's processed and manipulated to sound like a psychedelic guitar freak-out. The album closer, "In The Morning," is a desolate love song, given a stark reading with Redfearn's

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hopeless whispered vocal, droning synthesizer and **Laura Gulley**'s somber fiddle. *Sister Death*'s 12 tracks include five instrumentals that range from a dissonant Balkan meets new wave dirge to subtle Arabic pulsations highlighted by delicate, wordless female vocals full of ornamentations. There are also seven conventional songs including an agonizingly poignant reading of "St. James Infirmary" that features Redfearn and his accordion and a stark, funeral bass drum. Spellbinding, and tantalizing, *Sister Death* is a rich, complex work that gradually reveals its musical and emotional mysteries over repeated listening.

"Always evolving and ever elusive" is how Redfearn describes his band's lineup and music. The Eyesores are a stunning live act, able to bring Redfearn's multifaceted arrangements to life with a combination of astonishingly tight musicianship and uncontained, carnival-like energy that leaves audiences physically and emotionally exhausted. "Instrumentally, the Eyesores can sound like Weimar period cabaret music, gritty Reich-ish minimalism, Middle Eastern disco, or droning Velvet Underground-style thronging," Redfearn says. "During any given performance, the Eyesores might number between three and 15 people and are just as likely to launch into a chaotic medley of traditional Eastern European melodies, which disintegrates into a wall of howling feedback, as they are to spin off a delicate and mournful country-pop song."

To celebrate the release of *Sister Death*, Alec K. Redfearn and the Eyesores will perform at the **2012 Sonic Circuits Festival of Experimental Music**, an international experimental music festival held annually in Washington D.C. The Eyesores have played at numerous festivals and toured in North America and Europe, in addition to performing frequently in Providence and elsewhere in the Northeast.

For more information on Alec K. Redfearn and the Eyesores, please see:

www.aleckredfearn.com - www.facebook.com/aleckredfearnandtheeyesores - www.twitter.com/aleckredfearn

ALEC K. REDFEARN & THE EYESORES: BAND BIO

Alec K. Redfearn is a composer, accordionist, songwriter, improviser and performance artist who grew up listening to hardcore (**The Minutemen**, **Meat Puppets**, **Butthole Surfers**) and metal (**Slayer**, **Metallica**). He moved to Providence, RI in the late 80s and became involved in the **AS220 Arts and Performance Collective**. "I taught myself accordion as a reaction to grunge," Redfearn explains. "Anything that's hyped, I immediately despise. Since accordion was hated, I said 'this will be my fuck you' to the rock world. Then I got obsessed with it." The accordion led him to British folk, Eastern European, and Indian classical music.

He listened to gypsy music in all its global variations and Turkish and Arabic music, discovering their intersections with Western sounds. He started **Space Heater**, an absurdist "miniature industrial" band that evolved into the **Amoebic Ensemble**. Redfearn composed the bulk of the music, a mix of classical, rock, and folk influenced by Weimar Republic composers, traditional European folk music, free jazz and punk. The noise music explosion in Providence made him realize he could take the music he was doing - a mix of circus-y sounds and the folk music he'd been listening to - and combine it with punk to make "the kind of aggressive music the noise bands were."

When the Amoebic dissolved, he founded **Alec K. Redfearn and the Eyesores**, combining the influences shared by Amoebic (folk, cabaret, jazz) with a melancholy atmosphere invoked by Redfearn's bleak lyrics and songs based on country and rock music. The band's 1998 debut, *The Eyesores*, was a six-song cassette. After a series of self-produced mini-albums, they cut a proper album, *May You Dine on Weeds Made Bitter by the Piss of Drunkards*, on **Magic Eye Singles**. *Bent at the Waist* (**Handsome** 2002), their second offering was hailed as for its left-field alternative pop sound. *Every Man For Himself & God Against All* (**Corleone**, 2003) was embraced by lovers of avant/experimental and indie-rock music. *Dream Magazine* raved: "From harsh nightmare riddles, to sweetly swooning tranced-out droning somnambulant reveries, psychedelic folk, prog-rock, old-time country, acidic cabaret, dark circus music, and sinister dream fragments ... well worth investigating."

In 2005, **Cuneiform** released *The Quiet Room*, a 15 song, primarily instrumental album featuring an 11-piece band plus guests laying down lush layers of strings, horns and feedback - electronics, telephones, noise-making devices - over a solid backbone of drums/percussion, accordion and bowed contrabass. On *The Smother Party* (**North East Indie**, 2006) Redfearn and the band played in a more traditional song format and, although the subject matter was grim, they were presented with a playful, fairy tale-like lyricism.

The Blind Spot (Cuneiform, 2007) was a musically and conceptually ambitious work, mixing classical and folk instrumentation, electronics and processed noise, vocals and invented/experimental musical instruments. It was a multifaceted epic, a lyrical requiem mass in secular form, but highly spiritual, a cathartic work that dealt with Redfearn's own drug addiction and coming to terms with the friends he lost on his path to sobriety.

Sister Death continues to expand on Redfearn's singular vision with another excursion into subliminal emotion and skewed songwriting, a worthy addition to his already impressive catalogue.

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution]
versions of these images
are available for download on
www.cuneiformrecords.com



ALEC K. REDFEARN AND THE EYESORES – SISTER DEATH NOTES

We asked Alec K. Redfearn to talk about Sister Death – the title's meaning, and some thoughts on each track. Here's what he said:

The title "Sister Death" was an abbreviated version of the original title, "All Praise Be Yours, My Lord, Through Sister Death From Whose Embrace No Mortal Can Escape". The title is taken from St. Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Sun".

I first heard these lines chanted by a group of nuns at my grandmother's wake in 2005. The nuns were from the Sisters of Mercy order. My grandmother was a lay member of the order. She was a Charismatic Catholic and claimed to be able to speak in tongues and levitate. She was an incredibly kind and beatific person and she cemented my faith in God as a child. Ironically, my faith was later destroyed by nuns also belonging to the Sisters of Mercy...

The aforementioned lines had a great impact on me because I had never perceived death as a feminine entity. Sister Death evokes the image of a maternal, welcoming figure. Accepting the fact that everything has an end has been difficult for me, especially as I get older.

In the tarot, the death card symbolizes change. It's the 13th card in the deck. $7 + 6 = 13$. Six is circular; seven doesn't fit into a circle. Fire and death are both agents of change. Hence the repetition of these themes throughout the lyrics on "Sister Death".

I spent about 6 years writing for this record. I've trashed dozens of tunes along the way. This record is probably the most accessible of our releases so far. I spent a lot of time obsessing over kraut-rock, space rock and psychedelic rock on the past few years, so that influence is bound to be felt. I've tried to move away from the Eastern European/Gypsy sound as that sound has been beaten to death by mediocre American "Gypsy Punk" bands in the past few years. I have always eschewed involvements in genres and movements because it automatically gives you a shelf life. We've always tried to change things up as we went. Probably the biggest change in our sound is the addition of Orion on the Acetone Top 5 organ and vocals. Orion is insanely talented and she has an incredibly unique voice. These latest batch of songs have been built around the Keyboard and accordion. But it still sounds like us. Some things simply don't change. My melodic obsessions and idiosyncrasies remain imbedded in the music, and I suppose they always will be.

Here some thoughts on each track:

FIRE SHUFFLE- I wrote this tune shortly after Orion and I had a fire in our kitchen, during which Orion awoke in a smoke-and-flame-engulfed room and had to run to safety. The song is about moving forward and not being anchored to your past. It features fire and snake imagery. I attempt a fire-like sound on the accordion solo (accordion run through a rat pedal and a crybaby wah pedal). Harmonica virtuoso Chris Turner (Whompers, Wholebellies, Nee Ningy Band, Portsmouth Sinfonia, Eugene Chadbourne) also plays a chaotic, screaming chromatic harp solo. After a conversation that I had with Ember Schrag last week, I started researching Seraphim, the angels that flew around the throne of God singing "holy, holy, holy". Seraphim literally translates to "burning ones" and the name is sometimes associated with snakes. I thought this worth noting.

UNAWAKE- Nothing can harm you if you create your own reality, but living in your own created reality comes at a price. The melody was inspired by the Irish dance music of the Sliabh Luachra region (counties Cork and Kerry), lyrics inspired by the symbolist poets. This track features Providence's Irish fiddle father and daughter team, Jimmy and Hannah Devine (Hannah is also the album's cover model). Also featured on this track is my friend Clint Heidorn (LA guitarist who released a solo album of instrumental guitar music earlier and was a member of Cat Hair Ensemble, Killsonic and a slew of grindcore bands). He was the guitarist in the "Eyesores West" (LA pickup band I assembled for the Don't Knock the Rock festival). My oldest and closest friend and occasional Eyesores member Don Larson provided the blazing clawhammer banjo part on this.

THE 7 AND 6- Sex and death. Common themes for me. Sex as escape, death as the inevitable conclusion. Love is the war against death. Death always wins, but this is no reason to stop fighting. The latter half of the song describes a dream I had in which I was driving and my sister was in the passenger seat. Our childhood cat who had died ten years earlier (she lived to be 22) was sitting on her lap and talking to us. We asked her to stay with us, but she explained that this was impossible because everything must end. Then she turned into smoke and ash and curled into a wisp that flew out the window of the car. I awoke with an incredible feeling of sorrow and wrote this song. Yanna Kiriapolis guests on violin. In the tarot, the death card symbolizes change. It's the 13th card in the deck. $7 + 6 = 13$. Six is circular; seven doesn't fit into a circle.

LONGREACH- Theme music I composed for a web series which has yet to come to fruition. It's one of two pieces that were inspired by the "Rosemary's Baby" theme. It features 16 tracks of Amoebic Ensemble alum and frequent Eyesores' guest Laura Gulley's violin, creating a virtual chamber orchestra. It also features Orion on lead (albeit wordless) vocals. Clint Heidorn played the low-end Morricone-esque guitar.

AMPLIFIER HUM- This was originally performed as an a cappella duet with a handheld tape recorder. I created this arrangement for the record. Lyrics are about lost love (obviously). The ocean as a great black yawning devouring void is the chief archetypal image here. The bass pedals on a Hammond B3 w/Leslie produced the crazy bass sounds at the end.

BLACK ICE- This was originally composed as a duet for Don Larson and I to perform, later modified and expanded to be performed at Margie and Jim Ayer's wedding as part of a Thelemic ceremony, additionally transmogrified into a psych/ metal piece for our short lived side project, "Head of Horns", and finally, further expanded and brought to the Eyesores. Clint Heidorn and Eyesores Alum Domenick Panzarella loaded this up with about 5 or 6 guitar tracks.

EXHUMED- This is technically a bonus track. It's the theme music I created for Richard Griffin's and Guy Benoit's horror film "Exhumed". It's the second of the two pieces inspired by the "Rosemary's Baby" theme (I got a bit obsessed with the "Rosemary's Baby" theme last year.) Orion is again featured on lead (wordless) vocals.

This is my recording debut on the baritone ukulele. Amoebic Ensemble alum Steven Jobe guests on viola and Chris Sadlers' 10-year-old daughter provided the second set of vocals on this (she was so thrilled to be involved. It was adorable.)

SCRATCH- This is an Amoebic Ensemble tune that I originally wrote for the Pan Twilight Circus in 1992. We've been using it in our live sets the past few years, so it seemed appropriate to include this unhinged version as a bonus track.

HASHISHIN- This is a dance number that was heavily influenced by Erikin Koray and other great Turkish psych-rock acts of the 1970s as well as Hawkwind. It features myself on baritone uke (which is run through a big muff pedal on the solos). Orion returns on lead (wordless) vocals. Chris Turner makes another appearance on chromatic and Thai harmonicas and jawharp. Clint Heidorn also guests on guitar.

ST. JAMES INFIRMARY- The third bonus track is an old folk tune that I have been performing solo since the mid nineties. In addition to singing and accordion, I play kick drum. This piece was recorded live with myself in the main gallery space of Machines With Magnets and the rest of the band in the live room of the studio. The other Eyesores were monitoring with headphones, but I couldn't hear them.

WINGS OF THE MAGPIE- This was originally composed as a duo for Eyesores' bassist Chris Sadlers and I to play, using a metronome running through a sweep echo as the rhythm track. It was adapted for the band in 2007, but I lost that arrangement in a hard drive crash. So I created a new arrangement for this record. It was inspired in part by some of the rhythms in Ethiopian music, but the similarities end there. The lyrics are stream of conscious strangeness and I could only explain their meaning to you if I was under hypnosis. Clint returns on guitar on this one.

IN THE MORNING- This dirge-like song returns to fire imagery. It was intended to be a song about infidelity, but performing it as a duet with my recently former girlfriend/fiancé gave it a far more poignant tone, at least for me. It now stands as a companion piece to "Fire Shuffle". It's the aftermath. Laura Gulley returns to chase my accordion melody in a delay-like pattern.

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Fire and death are both agents of change. Hence the repetition of these themes throughout the lyrics on "Sister Death".

Alec K. Redfearn, Providence RI, Aug. 2012

Eyesores Personnel for Sister Death

Frank Difficult - percussive racket and electronic sounds
Orion Rigel Dommissie - voice, Acetone Top 5 organ, Hammond B3, Wurlitzer electric piano
Mark Elliott - doumbek
Matt McLaren - drums and percussion
Alec K. Redfearn - voice, accordion, synths, baritone ukulele
Chris Sadlers - contrabass, electric bass
Ann Schattle - horn in F

With Special Guests
Hannah Devine - fiddle
Jimmy Devine - fiddle
Laura Gulley - violin, multi-tracked string section
Clint W. Heidorn - electric guitar
Yanna Kiriapoulos - violin
Don Larson - banjo
Seth Manchester - synth
Domenick Panzarella - electric guitar
James Quigley - backing vocals
Lauren Sadlers - backing vocals
Keith Souza - backing vocals
Chris Turner - harmonica

ALEC K. REDFEARN & THE EYESORES	THE BLIND SPOT	CUNEIFORM	2007
<i>Lineup:</i> Alec K. Redfearn (voice, accordion, jawharp, organ, slide/fuzz guitar, loops); Frank Difficult (loops, processing, electronics); Orion Rigel Dommissie (voice and organ); Jason McGill (alto sax); Laura Gulley (violin, viola, voice) Matt McLaren (drums, glockenspiel, percussion); Ann Schattle (horn in F); Erica Schattle (bassoon); Domenick Panzarella (electric guitar); Steve Jobe (hurdy-gurdy, drone hurdy-gurdy, gong-drum); Sarah Tolan-Mee (violin); Olivia Geiger (violin); Margie Wienk (contrabass); Chris Sadlers (contrabass); Ellen Santaniello (soprano voice)			

"Those of you looking for some thoughtful, intriguing and varied music should look no further than "The Blind Spot", the latest album from Alec K Redfearn and the Eyesores. Full of emotional songs and a host of instruments, the album is deeply absorbing, the instrumentation meaning the songs get pulled into unexpected places. Throughout, the droning accordion gives the album a Eastern-European folk feel... Equally interesting are the oblique lyrics that read like Dadaist fairy tales, both the words and music fitting together like hand and glove."

- Simon Lewis, *Terrascope Online*, August 2007, www.terrascope.co.uk

"... it's refreshing and reassuring that his latest release, *The Blind Spot*, turns inward from the showy frills and trills of that ["punk cabaret"] scene, giving us a **careful song cycle that's more Terry Riley than Danny Elfman or Kurt Weill**. The album leads off with a two-minute mouth harp solo called "The Perforated Veil" and it's a great induction into the world that Redfearn has built... Metallic and breathy at the same time, it begins to hint at both Redfearn's gallery of weary-eyed addicts and lost souls that inhabit this album and the focused sense of purpose with which he's approached its composition.

The songs on *The Blind Spot* weave through each other, sharing melodies and lyrics and getting us from one point to the other through dreamy logic. ... Phrases repeat over gradual shifts in instrumentation, from lush string arrangements and bellowing accordion to washy, tick-tocking percussion. Redfearn and vocalist Ellen Santaniello combine for a fitting mixture of Old World religious searching and Lynchian groundlessness.

...imagistic...work of art..." - Matt Parish, *Performer*, www.performermag.com

"The Blind Spot is Alec K. Redfearn & the Eyesores' saddest album yet. It also contains some of the group's prettiest arrangements. ... Lyrics are artful and evocative, vocals remain subdued, arrangements are graceful throughout, with the accordion still occupying the center spot."
- Francois Couture, *All Music Guide*, www.allmusic.com

"Determinedly out of step with musical fashions of the day (he gravitated to playing accordion because he found grunge revisionist), [Redfearn] nevertheless found his gypsy-folk-noise-drone-style of composition firmly in vogue last year, with the resurgence of folk and Balkan music. ... *The Blind Spot*, [is] an ambitious song cycle that incorporates choral arrangements and a soprano vocalist, lending a true requiem-like feel to this meditation on loss and addiction. **Redfearn is in top form here, directing the magic collision of spiralling waltzes with the drone of a specially built hurdy-gurdy.** Despite the dark theme, the music is still exquisitely pretty... Artful yet entirely genuine, this is the most accomplished Eyesores record to date." - Helen Spitzer, *Exclaim!*, July 2007, www.exclaim.ca

"Alec Redfearn's 'Myra' wafts out of the Victrola, uh, the CD player, like a parlor song written circa 1885. Its séance-like insubstantiality is maintained with images of a dead girl's reappearance...but there are... references to infomercials and naugahyde... **Redfearn gives us a sort of neo-archaeo-folk, evoking Michigan band the Great Lakes Myth Society or even Sufjan Stevens.** ... **This is not like music played in the United States since Edgar Allan Poe, except maybe in Virgil Thompson's salon. ... It could be work music for the studios of eccentric mid-century artists Joseph Cornell, Pavel Tchelitchew or John Graham.** And it grows "curiouser and curiouser"... A composition called "The Flesh of the Drum" draws inspiration from Hieronymus Bosch's painting "The Garden of Earthly Delights" in the Prado museum, Madrid, like the musical instruments depicted in it that were recreated and appear on the album."
- Michael R. Mosher, *Leonardo*, September 2007

"The central theme of *"I am the Resurrection and the Light"*, the songcycle that makes up a large part of *The Blind Spot* is drug addiction and loss, and it's a eulogy for friends of Redfearn who lost their lives battling an addiction. ... The music influenced by a plethora of bands and composers, but those of the Rock In Opposition movement are the most prominent. ...that type of music...seems to exist somewhere outside of time... they share some elements [with]...*Sleepytime Gorilla Museum*, but **The Eyesores**...are more refined and much more subtle. ... It's...**a more dreamy mix of contemporary composed music, folkmusics from all over the world, cabaret and progressive rock to create a more pensive mood.** ... [rating: 5 stars]" - Martijn Busnik, *Musique Machine*, www.musiquemachine.com

"...Alec K. Redfearn...doesn't sit still for very long. ... the changes from album to album are both vast and impressive. His latest release with the Eyesores, *The Blind Spot* finds Redfearn's music at its most grand and orchestrated...
... "Queen of the Wires" is probably the best track here, aided nicely by vocal harmonies arranged by Marissa Nadler. ... Neutral Milk Hotel comparisons... It is a...essentially folk-driven tune about a dead girl. ... Redfearn manages to take a page from the Blues book here, building the song on repetition, letting the stilted delivery of lyrics pluck over the smooth strings and percussion. The chorus elevates...but the song never loses its restraint, which makes it all the more haunting in the end.
...noisy bridges...appear sporadically between tracks on the album. ...the noise experiments themselves...drone and swirl...
There is an ambition to this album... *The Blind Spot* is the sound of an artist who tries it all at once..."
- Matthew Fiand, *PopMatters*, September 28, 2007, www.popmatters.com

"This is the most concept-based project of the group. It is intended as a eulogy for several friends of Alec who died of drug abuse, and a meditation on his own abuse...about the blind spot...
The songs are arranged at first like a beautiful arranged street theatre concept, with the accordion leading the compositions (but not leading the arrangements) often giving a circus/fair-ground like effect. The energy builds up as tensions...
The operatic voices...add extra drama as well as comfort and support... Here and there strange electronic (or not) sounds... One of the strangest instruments used is a drone-hurdy-gurdy, developed for *Steve Jobe's* opera 'Jean D'Arc' (1993), and a gong-drum, one of a series of instruments inspired by the painting 'Garden of Earthly delight' by *Hieronymus Bosch* ...
An interesting and...ambitious theatre-like musical concept." - Gerald Van Waes, *PsycheMusic*, progressive.homestead.com

"A beautifully intriguing album. ...the first of a series of jewels begins in an unassuming, gently personal kind of Eastern-European kind of folk tune. The melodies are ravishing throughout - sparse, simple with twists, solemn and uplifting. Instruments are poignant glockenspeils and welcoming hurdy-gurdy. ... Alec K himself has a rich yet fragile voice, joined by equally delicious high female harmonies (often very reminiscent of Lake Of Puppies or Sea Nymphs) - classical voices with a hint of eccentric Americana. ...I Am The Resurrection and the Light song cycle: eight interlocking, often dazzling pieces. Soaked with genuine feeling and deep spirituality, these songs fuse 20th/21st century contemporary composition with dark cabaret and klezmer. Beginning as bittersweet, bright and slightly strange sea shanties very very reminiscent of William D Drake...strangeness...sounding like 65daysofstatic playing John Adams and Steve Reich... Songs that also journey to some dark and lonely places... However bleak, there's extraordinary depth to this music... The melodies...promise hope and celebrate fragile humans despite the darkness. Haunting, compelling, quite unique, 'The Blind Spot' is an album to live with, to keep returning to." - *Organ Magazine*, #243

"...*The Blind Spot*...is a dark, alien venture into left-of-centre experimentation.
The band plays a bleak swath of drone, noise and folk... *Queen Of The Wires*... with its pairing of male and female vocals, some bassoon from Erica Schattle, and violin, is reminiscent of dark neo-folk band Black Tape For A Blue Girl. Redfearn's accordion...evokes...Finnish accordionist Kimmo Pohjonen. ...
...bulk of the CD, the eight-song conceptual *I Am The Resurrection And The Light - A Song Cycle*... takes the listener past references to The Velvet Underground, Russian neo-Kraut band Vespero, Stereolab, early Tangerine Dream, Jethro Tull (minus the flute) and German experimentalists Einstürzende Neubaten. The descending and ascending electronics of *Blue On White* and the brooding percussion of *The Radiator Hymn* set the pace... the last two tracks of the song cycle... feature customized instruments performed by Steve Jobe, the drone hurdy-gurdy and the gong-drum. This CD will most likely appeal to any fan of avant-garde music or dark, droning Velvets-style rock. ... Conclusion: 7 out of 10"
-Jim Corcoran, *Dutch Progressive Rock Page*, Vol. 6, 2008

“Alec K. Redfearn And The Eyesores... take elements from all types of music and fuse them into an offbeat mixture of indie-pop, folk and neo-classical genres. Imagine a hybrid of lively systemic music of Michael Nyman fused with many an act on the Pickled Egg label. ... Album-wise THE BLIND SPOT...excellent musicianship and much in the way of experimentation... Occasionally, on the tracks sung by Laura Gulley, there’s an air of the long-lost excellent Miranda Sex Garden in the music. It is an album full of surprises though, not least that in the final track they wig-it-out going totally abstract and avant-garde. ...” - Alan Freeman, *Audion*, #55

“2007 TOP LISTS ... Delire Musical’s TOP 50 for 2007 and Delire Actuel’s TOP 30 picks, ... 1-5 ... Redfearn, Alec K. The Blind Spot 2007 cd ...” - Francois Couture, *Delire Musical/Delire Actuel (CFLX)*

“...here's the HQ favorites from 2007. ...here's some mostly unknown but very good 2007 albums ... Alec K. Redfearn and the Eyesores "The Blind Spot" ...” - Larry "Fuzz-O" Dolman, *Blastitude*, #26, WINTER/SPRING 2008, www.blastitude.com

THE SMOTHER PARTY

NORTH EAST INDIE [NEI 44]

2006

Lineup: Alec K Redfearn (accordion, vocals, etc.); Margie Wienk (string bass, vocals); Domenick Panzarella (guitar); Olivia Geiger (violin); Ann Schattle (horn); Matt McLaren (drums, glockenspiel, vocals)
Guest Musicians: Frank Difficult (electronics and processing); Jason McGill (alto sax); Orion Rigel Dommissie (vocals)

“Joy is abundant the minute Redfearn begins to play the accordion, the second the first song starts. A playful attitude... in the form of singing violins and the pitter patter of drummer keeping time.... Vocal harmonies...dance about each other in circles – **it’s a magnificent way to open a record, a complex and catchy introduction to a band I’m now firmly addicted to. Fortunately the rest of the album doesn’t disappoint.** Redfearn and the Eyesores play with their sound, modulating it enough to evoke cartoon images of French sailors one moment and tormented, hungry thieves the next. They stay sweetly listenable the entire time...exquisite song writing.

Though the songs are obvious and immediate, there exists an air of surrealism all over the disc. The accordion is, at times, turned into an electric instrument, sounding like a guitar about to gasp its last breath; the drums escalate from light percussive spices to all out assaults of bombastic flare and titanic rhythms. The lyrics...run the gamut from bloody details and awkward sexuality to mechanical, cold, stiff displays and demented takes on what an adjective can do for a word. ... Redfearn and company are...**constantly swimming against the current and fusing the strange with the recognizable in a seamless fashion.**

There’s a lot to love about this record, but first and foremost is how musically accomplished it is. This band plays together so well it’s scary. ...**It’s a miracle this band hasn’t seen more press. They certainly deserve it,** their ability to merge two distinct worlds of music into one is reason enough to check the band out.” – Lucas Schleicher, *Brainwashed*, 6/8/06, brainwashed.com

“Alec K. Redfearn, everyone’s favorite anarchic accordionist, is a man of many interests – punk and improv, krautrock and gypsy music, prog and electronic soundscapery. In this...he takes a more melodic, song-structured approach than on *The Quiet Room*, while retaining an air of submerged danger. The new album offers...melancholy waltzes...skewed and minor-key East European folk tunes, one stark blues lament and a 23-minute long improvisational freak-out. It hangs tipsily together, pulled in every direction by divergent ideas, but united by a subversive passion, a giddy surreality and the sing-songy arpeggios of Redfearn’s accordion.

...The songs mostly begin with unadorned accordion, moving in repetitive, fevered patterns. It’s an odd sound, reminding us of...mostly joyous, simple occasions...organ grinders, circus music, weddings and polka parties – but twisting it in uneasy, aggressive directions. ...their shadings of punk, 20th century classical and prog are jarring but not quite unexpected. ...

Smother Party is an adventurous and exciting piece of work from the Eyesores, perhaps a bit more accessible than *The Quiet Room* on the surface, but just as thought-provoking. **Ambrose Bierce once called the accordion “an instrument in harmony with the sentiments of an assassin.” If so, in an album that balances structured compositions with slashing improvisation, Redfearn is making the most of its innate character, the harmony and the assassin.**
– Jennifer Kelly, *Dusted*, 5/20/06, www.dustedmagazine.com

“*The Smother Party*...is a collection of tales about real and imagined horrors. The music is decidedly more cabaret than...*The Quiet Room*. However, *The Smother Party* does feature two lengthy instrumentals including the monumental “Gutterhelmet Ascending,” a highly dynamic, organic long-form duo piece for drums and distorted accordion...”
– Editorial reviews, *Amazon.com*

THE QUIET ROOM

CUNEIFORM [RUNE 204]

2005

Line-up: Alec K. Redfearn (accordion, piano, vocals, etc.); Margie Wienk (string bass, vocals); Alec Thibodeau (guitar); Ann Schattle (horn); Olivia Geiger (violin); Matt McLaren (drums); Chris Saraullo (percussion); Jason McGill (alto sax, etc.); Frank Difficult (electronics and processing)
Guest Musicians: Sara Stalnaker (cello); Matt Everett (viola)

“...They certainly deserve much wider recognition; their experimental Balkan/East European folk-inspired music is not only cleverly conceived, but executed with wit, style, and just a hint of darkness... Goth elements are reinforced by three minor-key vocal tracks with artfully morbid lyrics. ...Redfearn’s wheezy, rhythmic accordions, both amplified and unamplified, are the dominant instrumental sound, and while much of his playing has an authentic folk base, his compositions and arrangements are filled with eccentric embellishments and exaggerations. Drones and repeated riffs in many pieces take on a hypnotic, almost obsessive quality, giving the music an almost demonic urgency. It’s clear that minimalists such as Steve Reich have been a source of inspiration... the minimalist sensibility is wedded to modal folk melodies, with some skronky free jazz energy... along with occasional, totally unexpected electronic treatments, the most arresting of which are the beeper tone and then repeated rhythmic busy back signal on “Coke Bugs.” The use of telephone sounds brings to mind another similarly oriented futuristic folk group, Simon Jeffes’ marvelous Penguin Cafe Orchestra... The affectionate distortion of traditional materials is common to both bands, and both serve (or served) as vehicles for the vision of an individual leader. ...But...Alec K. Redfearn & the Eyesores...have a rougher, more visceral sensibility. They offer experimental future folk with elements of real dirt and sweat – and a touch of mania. Highly recommended.” – Bill Tilland, *All Music Guide*, www.allmusic.com

“...this Providence, Rhode Island nontet of reeds, strings, acoustic bass, drums, percussion, guitar, keys and even alarm clock and paper cutter breeze through this pan-folk, jazz and blues continuous song cycle of waltzes, drones, funeral dirges, dances, and ballads with an assured confidence that is breathtaking. One of the dangers of this kind of genre-blending, especially in roots music, is that it tends to be a little too polite and earnest... In this case, though, **this ensemble isn’t afraid to experiment**, whether it be the musique concrete samples and biting electronics on the Waitsonian “Coke Bugs” or the innovative accordion/sax dub of “Portuguese Man O’ War” dub or the raucous Sonic Youth guitar; thereby, **giving this gorgeous amalgam of 20th Century Americana, cabaret and theater music, Eastern European folk, noise rock and minimalism, a bracing textural snap**. ...wonderful ensemble interplay...”
– Richard Moule, *Signal to Noise*, #38, Summer 2005

“Accordionist Alec K. Redfearn heads up the Eyesores...whose stylistic influences are widespread: Gypsy music, experimental American composers such as Partch and Oliveros, folk, cabaret, and noise rock. This type of mélange sound like it shouldn’t work... On the contrary; *The Quiet Room*, their latest release on Cuneiform, is a delight.

Bizarre instrumentals like the electronica-laden “Coke Bugs” and phase chamber work “Morphine Drip” sit side by side with the TMBG-influenced indie rock song “The Bible Lite” and the hypnotic gypsy trance “Slo-Mo;” a motley, but entertaining, assortment. ...

...after hearing all of the wondrous hi-jinks on *The Quiet Room*, who would want them to change a thing?”

– Christian Carey, *Copper Press*, 2/7/05, www.copperpress.com

“Falling somewhere between psych-folk revival and free jazz, constructed from a diverse and unfashionable set of instruments including accordion, strings, glockenspiel, telephone and pots and pans, Alec K. Redfearn and the Eyesores’ fourth full-length is as bizarre as it is appealing. The pieces change from moment to moment, evoking Eastern European folksongs, Indian sitar music, multi-part madrigals and the sweet-sour celebration of circus music. Although largely organic and hand-fashioned, the tracks also include a substantial measure of electronic sounds...”

...his work has a definite theatrical flair. ...all of these pieces...are as much stage-set as free-standing compositions, a space against which unusual and foreign activities might be acted out.

The Quiet Room is divided between longer, more fully-realized pieces and short sound experiments. ...Only the longer pieces provide the space required to appreciate Redfearn’s skilled and collaborative band...who weave an interlocking tapestry of rhythms, harmonies and dissonances.

...during “Punjabi/Watery Grave”, the drum’s pulse provides a foundation for arabesques of violin and accordion, with occasional flourishes of guitar. The sounds never move in unison, instead finding the space around one another in a way that simply would not be possible if the band were less able or less familiar with each other.

The album is mostly instrumental, but vocals occasionally rise out of the texture of the tracks – and when they do, they’re used more as instruments than conveyers of meaning. ...

Many of the best tracks have no words, no voices at all, and are no less interesting for it. ...The title track, with its hazy, hanging tones that shimmer and shift, is pure, brain-stem-level psychotropia, acting on you in ways that elude and precede words. ...

This is wonderful stuff – brave and experimental, yet warmly human. Make room on your folk revival shelf for something that may be influenced by folk, but is in no way a revival.

– Jennifer Kelly, *Splendid*, 3/29/2005, www.splendidmagazine.com

“...Like an avant-rock “marching”-chamber-band their energy is simply captivating. ...musically a lot happens. “Punjabi/Watery Grave” is especially hypnotic. This track is...based upon this hypnotic one note rhythm that could be heard on an Indian hit... Perhaps the most brilliant track on the album...”

A splendid, highly recommended release. Perfect from beginning to end. 4.5 STARS”

– Gerald Van Waes, *Progressive Homestead*, March 2005, progressive.homestead.com

“...homespun intimacy...on this recording by a band that tends to shun brightness and gaiety. “Providence is haunted,” so the booklet notes tell us – something one might attribute to...Lovecraft and his “Old Ones.” ...Led by accordion and winds, with occasional guitar and frequent detours through contrasting textural and mood breaks, Alec Redfearn’s music turns up a clever American twist on the Art Bears/Zamla axis, unafraid to admit having absorbed influences from klezmer and Balkan traditions as well. Alternately there is a gloomy, almost post-rock muse speaking to this band, which appears on the few vocal tracks. *The Quiet Room* doesn’t dazzle you with mind-boggling compositional structure, but rather locks quickly into grooves of minimal development...implying...that **simplicity trumps when shooting for the outre. ...place them next to Hamster Theatre and Non Credo on the most approachable side of current American R.I.O. music.**”

– Michael Ezzo, *Exposé*, Roundtable Review, #32, Sept. 2005

“...Like label mates Hamster Theater, they’ve completely absorbed the folk influences of Eastern Europe and woven them into a complex musical fabric of their own creation, while retaining an aggression and attitude that gives them a unique twisted character and separates them from the rest of the pack... With accordion front and center courtesy of Mr. Redfearn...a rhythm section of string bass, drums, and multiple percussionists drives the

bottom end and creates the structures, while lively guitars, bowed strings, saxes, horns and various electronic gadgetry carry the fragments of melodic turmoil that fill in behind the accordion's lead. There are...decent vocals...but only on a handful of tracks. There's plenty going on here to capture the listener's imagination, and for a band that plays most of their pieces in odd time meter, these folks flat-out rock. ...Those looking for melodic adventure need look no further – the Eyesores deliver the goods and even give you a little extra.”

– Peter Thelen, *Exposé*, Roundtable Review, #32, Sept. 2005

“...a twisted American rock ensemble who capture the bustle and out-of-sequence nature of modern life in their music. ...Individual pieces are often built on themes reminiscent of Scandinavian and East European folk music, with pseudo-minimalist repetition and part layering creating a sense of building, at its best like a combination of Samla Mammas Manna and Velvet Underground. The group is promiscuous in its influences, with a clear appreciation of out jazz and soundtrack-style collages of music and background noises. The vocal parts are infrequent, melodically inventive, and ultimately fairly unobtrusive. ...*The Quiet Room* is one of my top ten releases of the year.”

– Sean McPhee, *Exposé*, Roundtable Review, #32, Sept. 2005

“...The Night It Rained Glass On Union Street is a piece that combines the Middle-Eastern feel of say Alamaailman Vasarat with the angular rock of King Crimson and Present. Sometimes, the music proceeds in a light cabaret like style, other times the tension drips from the music. ...

...Punjabi/Watery Grave... has some mesmerizing, trippy guitars... we hear the combination of the relatively frolic folk melodies and the Crimsonesque instrumentation (although more world-music-like than KC). The band can be compared to Paranoise, although this combo seems less rocking, more avant-garde and less serious. ...

Morphine Drip...reminds me of...the minimalist elements of Steve Reich. ...

This is quite a unique album. Take a dose of angular rock, add doses of minimalism, cabaret and quite a lot of Balkan folk influences and you get something that can sound like Steve Reich or Alamaailman Vasarat (although not in the same track). ...they are strongly linked to the avant-garde with which they also share a sense of humor. What makes this band stand out, is the link to the music of Present and King Crimson, which adds the necessary tension in places. ...”

– Jurriaan Hage, *Axiom of Choice*, Oct. 2005, www.cs.uu.nl

“...music writing is typically a thankless occupation. ...For every promo that's even moderately appealing, there are heaping piles of digitally encoded shite that aren't even worth their weight in plastic...but once in a long while you do find something that completely blows you away. *That*, that moment when you realize that such-and-such album is one of the most exciting things you've heard in a long time or that such-and-such band has changed the way you think about music forever, that makes it *all* worth it. ...

...I had a moment like that while working on the review for Alec K. Redfearn & The Eyesores' *Every Man For Himself & God Against All*. ...What I discovered was an immaculately composed world of metaphorically ripe lyricism set against a kind of earnest musicianship that I'd scarcely believed existed. ...

...at his core Redfearn is basically just one of those artists and musicians who's profoundly unburdened by the kind of musical preconceptions that divide the scene into hostile factions and sub-genres. **He doesn't seem to be trying to make indie-rock or noise-rock or punk or experimental-whatever, he's pretty much just making music... quite beautiful music.**

...his new album *The Quiet Room*...**I would today describe as one of the strongest records to come out in '05.** With much richer production-values and a fuller arrangement, *The Quiet Room* takes a decidedly more musical tack than *Every Man*..., reducing Redfearn/Margie Wienk's vocals to a more peripheral role and giving room for the ensemble's wholly unique brand of bastard free-jazz-noise-rock-indie-klezmer. Meandering through a pristine landscape of accordion, strings, piano, various percussion, guitar and noise instrumentation, on *The Quiet Room*, sedate musical promenades quickly explode into manic convulsions of clatter and jarring atonal arrangements before quickly fading...back into gently arranged atmospherics. Nothing like the soft lullabies or cacophonous nose-bleeds that tend to propagate today's instrumental music, this is music...accountable only to its own ever-evolving thematic language and its apparently unceasing creative inertia.

The few vocal tracks on *The Quiet Room*...serve as a kind of grounding, lending a human voice... When the delicate refrains of Redfearn/Wienk's melodies end, their presence nonetheless lingers in the space like a ghost or an echo; as if the music itself was...an elaboration of things that words could not express....

If you're one of those people that does take some stock in what music writers like myself have to tell you...**I strongly suggest you go pick up *The Quiet Room*. ...it's great music that's unlike most everything around.** Hmmm... maybe this job isn't so bad after all.”

– Germ Ross, *ArtNoise*, 6/13/05, www.deadmetaphor.com

“...this nonet provides **a refreshing shot in the arm to progressive rock drenched stylizations.** The band often generates...notions of a gang of gypsies, meshed with a revved-up jug band effect amid...sonorous strings and knotty rock riffs. They...exude a folksy disposition via an organic acoustic element... The musicians also display a propensity for turning up the heat with metallic musings, featuring pulsating, off-kilter rhythms and steely-edged guitar parts. ...Through it all, this band aims to excite, thanks to a surfeit of charmingly inventive surprises. (Eagerly recommended...)”

– Glenn Astarista, *Jazz Review*, jazzreview.com

“Records of the Year 2005: Top 10, Alec K. Redfearn and The Eyesores – *The Quiet Room* (Cuneiform)– Tiit Kusnets, *Post Times* (Estonia)

“...this is a far more musically ambitious progrock flavored outing. **Fanciful Canterbury ghosts wander through the hedge maze; European folk forms appear and disappear, angular rock frenzy, and odd tempo changes keep things inventively unsettled. Woozy cabaret twilight spills out into the afternoon; genres and centuries blur.** Gypsy dreams, Klezmer stomps, minimalist cycles, ambient drones, psychedelia, folk dance rituals that have lost their meaning... This has the feel of sleeping with a fever, phasing in and out of nightmares and dreams that are as harrowing as they are compelling...” – Gray Parsons, *Dream Magazine*, #5, Spring 2005

FEATURE:

“Alec K. Redfearn: Free Jazz and Gypsy Prog,” by Jennifer Kelly, *Splendid Magazine* <http://www.splendidmagazine.com/features/redfearn/>

“Every once in a while a band comes along that makes you realize how very narrow the parameters of music are. Alec K. Redfearn's Eyesores are one such band, droning and grinding and polka-ing through dark, experimental territories rooted as much in gypsy songs as they are in French prog and free jazz. They've been at it since 1997, resolutely refusing to fit into any kind of category, even the currently popular psyche-folk niche that's inhabited by many of their friends and fellow travellers.

Listening to the band's *Quiet Room*, a quietly brilliant mix of folk and dub, jazz and prog, pop and drunken tango, you cannot help but question basic assumptions. ... What would the Kinks sound like if they took up Sufi mysticism? And where exactly does this off-ramp from the great pop music highway lead to? We caught Alec Redfearn by phone recently... in his home town of Providence...

Splendid: ...what kinds of music do you look to for inspiration?

Alec K. Redfearn: When I first moved to Providence, I'd been playing in this band called Wavering Shapes, which was kind of like this SST Records-influenced stuff. ... But when I moved to Providence, it was to join this group called Meatball Fluxus. It was a Dada, Fluxist performance art group that also did free improvisational music, and also some Cagian kind of things. ...

While I was playing with them, I started playing accordion. I had been playing bass before that... At the time, there were not that many bands with accordions.

...There's a group in Providence called The Smiling Dog Band. ...they started developing this really weird, almost simplistic, but really driving, primitive folk music. ... I wanted to learn those tunes. So I was moving away from these Palmer Hughes tunes and towards these weird bastardizations of Morris Dance tunes and Irish tunes and that sort of stuff.

At the same time, I had been listening to a lot of gypsy music. ...There's a lot of variation to gypsy music. ...

Splendid: But it does have kind of an anarchic, rebellious sound to it, doesn't it? The accordion?

Alec K. Redfearn: ...what appealed to me about the instrument initially was that it was kind of a confrontational sound. Especially at the time I started playing it -- it was around 1990. You had all this grunge stuff going on, which, to me, just seemed kind of lazy. ... It seemed like this lazy revisionist early 1970s thing that was mostly about posturing. And then I was getting really excited about this whole experimental end of punk rock that was happening during the 1980s. ...during the early 1990s, this whole revolution had faded. The stuff that was getting big...was...grungy 1970s rock. And also the twee-pop thing. I just wasn't that excited about either. I think, as a reaction, I wanted to move as far away as possible from what was hip... That's when I started playing the accordion. It seemed more confrontational than any of the other stuff. ...