

Mark Adkins - subvocal

Artist Biography

Mark Adkins' life did not start out an "easy" life though it seems it should have... Born In upstate New York in a small quiet town on the Saint Lawrence River just across from Canada, Adkins left those idyllic woods, at the age of 3 when mom moved the family, Mark, brother and sister to Los Angeles to be near her family. They landed in, what was then, a middle class neighborhood in Watts, just in time for the Watts riots.

Music entered Mark's life through his Mother who sang everyday, and from the albums that his older siblings played nonstop in the house. By the time he was 5 years old he knew he wanted to be a musician. Mark started singing at this very young age. It would be later in life that he would finally pick up an acoustic guitar but his first love would be the drums.

Mark started writing as a child. His first instrument was given to him by his sister's boyfriend, at age 13. The harmonica quickly became an obsession and a release for Mark. He did little else but practice and play harp at all times and wherever he could and was soon playing regularly in local bands. During this time he also joined his high school acapella choir and soon became one of two tenors for the school's 10 member vocal ensemble, as well, but it would be much later in life when Adkins would begin to take serious steps towards his musical ambitions. Leaving home at 16, his first long detour would be a 10 year stint living in the wilderness of Northern California as a hippy dirt farmer in the California Redwoods.

Mark's first efforts at performing were at the open mics of Berkeley, CA at places like The Starry Plough and The Freight and Salvage. Before coming to Madison, Adkins teamed up with fellow songwriter Vincent Gambino and the two formed a duo called "Toxic Balance", performing briefly in the Bay Area. Vincent was eventually needed back home and Adkins went on the road to find the next thing. Several months later and after landing in Madison, WI, Mark and Vincent ended up together again for a brief stint and opened up for Three Dog Night in Madison, WI.

After arriving in Madison, Adkins started truly fulfilling the promise he made to become a working songwriter. With the addition of cellist - Stephen Pingry, drummer - Gregory Thornburg, Guitarist - Bradley Graham and Singer - Vanessa Tortolano, he formed "subvocal " Mark has performed with subvocal and as a soloist for almost ten years. "subvocal" has won "Best Band", "Best CD" (NIKKIS ROOM, 2005) and "Best Song" in the Madison Area Music Awards and they have been nominated several other times. Possession, from "Nikki's Room" was licensed for a radio ad. "Judi", inspired by the death of environmental activist, Judi Bari, caught the attention of the Station manager for KMUD (Garberville, CA) and this led to an on air interview and regular airplay for the song. Mark and subvocal has also been on Community radio stations in Park City, Utah and in Madison, WI and were featured on Wisconsin Public Radio's "Simply Folk" show.

Mark's dark, moody songs, come straight from the heart, unfiltered and very accessible. Combined with the ambient, layered instrumentation of the songs, Mark's performances fill the venues, and the hearts of listeners in an emotionally charged ride. It's common for people to come up after a show and say: "I cried during....." Whether solo or with his ensemble, the music is rich, full and dynamic, propelling listeners to another world.

"It seems that turmoil and having not been formally initiated as a songwriter has had its benefits". It was friend and lead guitarist, Brad Graham who first coined the bands genre:

"Ambient Psychedelic Folk Noir"