

Tumbledown – the duo behind “Sail Away”

Alan Collins and Scott Swan hail from the small town of East Wilton in rural Western Maine. As childhood friends, they developed a keen interest in and appreciation of music at a very early age. Both Alan and Scott started playing guitar in their early teens. Both played in several local bands in high school. Ironically, they never played in the same bands, though they got together and jammed frequently.

In their later teens, Alan and Scott began experimenting with writing music. Alan wrote a number of songs by himself and collaborated with Scott as well.

After high school Alan and Scott went their separate ways. Scott joined the Air Force and was stationed in Washington DC after basic training, where he worked in the Pentagon as a linguist for the next six years. He also met and married his wife there. After his hitch with the Air Force was up, he and his family moved to Florida, where he still lives today.

Meanwhile, Alan stayed in Maine, also got married, and lived in several nearby cities and towns before eventually settling down in Farmington. Although the distances divided them, they kept two things in common: their love of music and their love of Weld, Maine – a place where both Scott and Alan spent a lot of time in the summer from the time they were young.

Scott and Alan often went years without seeing each other, but remained good friends. When they did get together, Weld was always the meeting place. Alan recalls that whenever they got together after several years that “We just sort of picked where we left off. It was like we were never apart.” That was true of their friendship and their guitar playing as well.

In the summer of 2003, Scott and Alan started focusing on some of the songs they had written over the years together and apart and started making plans to record a CD. Unfortunately, it was a very hot summer and they spent much of their time in the lake trying to stay cool.

Nevertheless, they did manage to record three demo songs: “Guitar Melody #42” (Later re-recorded as “The Narrows”), “Stardust” and “Sail Away.” The latter two original demos are included as bonus tracks on their CD.

It was also that summer that they decided on the name “Tumbledown” for their duet, after one of the more prominent mountains in Weld. Both agreed that the name had to have something to do with Weld and they both felt it had a nice ring to it.

The next summer, Scott’s time to collaborate with Alan was limited, but he managed to finish the song “The Last To Say Goodbye” he’d been working on for a couple of years. They recorded a demo of that as well, but nothing more.

In the summer of 2005, Alan and Scott recorded all of the guitar, bass and vocal tracks for the songs included on “Sail Away” in three weeks at a cottage-turned-recording-studio on Webb Lake in Weld.

For the next year and a half, Alan – in his spare time – overdubbed backing vocals and additional percussion, and did a lot of mixing and re-mixing. The only thing lacking was drums. “We kind of did things backwards.” Alan recalls. “We had three different drummers lined up that fell through, but we had to keep the project moving or it would never have happened.”

Finally, last summer Alan found a drummer and was able to get the drum tracks recorded. After spending the rest of the summer and early fall doing more re-mixing, the project was finally complete. It was mastered, pressed and released in November of 2006.

“Sail Away” represents over 25 years of the songwriting of Scott and Alan, both individually and collectively. In many ways, it also represents a family effort in that Scott’s son Jonathon played with them on many of the songs (and wrote the song “Comfort Me”), and Alan’s wife Kay Sue and several children contributed their musical talents as well to make the CD complete.

Because both Scott and Alan live so far apart and both have full-time jobs (Scott is a teacher, which allows him to come to Maine in the summer), Tumbledown is not currently touring. However, plans are in the works for a future CD (they have more than enough material written), and possibly some future live shows as well.

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