

ROBBIE ROBERTSON

how to become Clairvoyant

*We had dreams/when the night was young
We were believers/when the night was young
We could change the world/stop the war
Never seen nothing/like this before
But that was back/when the night was young
--"When The Night Was Young"*

Only after completing his first solo album in more than 10 years did rock icon Robbie Robertson realize he had created the most personal and revealing album of his storied career. On How To Become Clairvoyant (429 Records/Savoy Label Group, Bella Coola Records), released April 5, 2011, the Rock and Roll Hall of Famer addresses publicly for the first time everything from a period of hard living and madness with Martin Scorsese, to strange encounters at the famed Chelsea Hotel, to his historic departure from The Band.

"I've never before been able to write about those times," says Robertson. "I was never comfortable taking the starring role in those stories. But enough time had passed that suddenly all of these thoughts and feelings finally crept under the door with a certain urgency."

The evolution of these recordings began as collaboration between Robertson and his longtime friend Eric Clapton. They had started on some ideas years before and finally decided to record them and see what they got. After hearing the recordings, Clapton told Robertson that he really liked his songs, and

exhorted him to make a new solo record. Eric said, "I'm just happy to be a part of it.'" Clapton ended up co-writing 3 songs and playing and singing on several others.

"Also featured on How To Become Clairvoyant, Robertson's fifth solo album, are keyboard great Steve Winwood and a new generation of axmen from Tom Morello (Rage Against The Machine, Audioslave) and Robert Randolph to Nine Inch Nails innovator Trent Reznor. Robertson also enlisted an array of unique vocalists including Angela McCluskey, Dana Glover, Rocco DeLuca and Taylor Goldsmith to accompany him.

"A lot of the making of this record was very experimental," notes Robertson, who co-produced the album with long-time collaborator Marius de Vries (Massive Attack, Bjork, Rufus Wainwright). "We were not coloring inside the lines. Musically and lyrically, I went to unexpected places. The songs became episodes in this musical journey."

On his previous two albums--Music For "The Native Americans" (1994) and Contact From The Underworld Of Redboy (1998)--Robertson explored his ancestry. With How To Become Clairvoyant, he takes on his rock heritage.

"When The Night Was Young," a melancholic reflection on youthful idealism, explores the period when the Hawks went out on their own to play the chitlin' circuit before joining Bob Dylan in New York. The smoldering "Straight Down The Line" resurrects the days when rock, blues, gospel and pop sparred with each other, and references the likes of everyone from Sonny Boy Williamson and Mahalia Jackson to Frank Sinatra. "Axman" pays tribute to some of the great guitar slingers that are no longer with us, from Link Ray to Duane Allman, from Robert Johnson to Jimmy James (the name by which Robertson knew Jimi Hendrix when they first met).

On the evocative "This Is Where I Get Off," he addresses his departure from The Band with uncertain optimism: "I've never talked about that before, about realizing that I could not fix or change the situation, and having to leave for my own survival." On "He Don't Live Here No More," he addresses a period of reckless excess, "It was a lifestyle of the time that most of my friends went through, some came out the other side, and for some, the train ran off the tracks." He handles the more intimate songs about love and relationships with subtlety rather than details: "Eric and I shared a lot about what was happening personally. It was a release for those feelings to come out in the music." Particularly poignant is the bluesy "Fear Of Falling", their first vocal duet on record.

Typically, there is a gunslinger attitude among guitarists. "But when Eric and I play together it's a partnership," says Robertson, who in 2004 was ranked in Rolling Stone's "100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time," as was Clapton. "It's as if our guitars are talking to each other. And it's always been that way--natural and comfortable. It's like in The Last Waltz when his guitar strap fell off and I picked it up. We had each other's back."

So in 2008, Robertson flew to London to record with Clapton, Winwood and an esteemed rhythm section of bassist Pino Palladino and drummer Ian Thomas. Progress on the album was interrupted though when Scorsese once again recruited Robertson to work on the music for one of his films, this time Shutter Island. "It was good to clear my head," Robertson says. "When I came back, I saw what I really wanted to do. The album became even more guitar-oriented."

He called on guitar wiz Tom Morello and soulful pedal steel savant Robert Randolph. "The guitar is a different instrument in their hands. Robert is extraordinary, a high-wire act, and I

was so impressed when Tom performed 'Tom Joad' with Bruce Springsteen at the Hall of Fame's 25th anniversary concert. He gets amazing noises out of his guitar." In addition, he asked Trent Reznor to complete the cinematic atmosphere of one of the album's instrumentals.

Bringing together the contemporary and the classic, the familiarity of the timeless and the passion of the now, on How To Become Clairvoyant Robbie Robertson looks into yesterday, both musically and personally, to discover today.

This is where I get off
This is where I move on
I know where I went wrong
'Long the way
--"This Is Where I Get Off"

ROBBIE ROBERTSON

A HISTORY

Born and raised in Toronto, Canada, Robbie Robertson in 1960 joined Ronnie Hawkins' backup band, The Hawks, which would eventually include future Bandmates Levon Helm, Rick Danko, Richard Manuel and Garth Hudson. His unique guitar style on songs such as "Who Do You Love" ushered in an era of classic bluesy rock and influenced numerous musicians. In 1965, The Hawks backed Bob Dylan on his maiden electric world tour and the next year Robertson sculpted the distinctive guitar solos on Dylan's Blonde On Blonde. Other recordings with Dylan would later be issued as The Basement Tapes.

In 1968, The Hawks became The Band and its debut album, Music From Big Pink, marked a watershed in rock history, boasting the Robertson-penned classic "The Weight." The next year, The Band performed at the Woodstock Festival before releasing an eponymous album that included the Robertson-composed "Up On Cripple Creek" and "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down." The Band became the first North American rock group to appear on the cover of Time magazine.

Stage Fright (1970) with the title track and "The Shape I'm In"; Cahoots (1971) with "Life Is A Carnival" and the double live set Rock Of Ages (1972) followed. In 1973, The Band performed before the largest rock concert audience in history (an estimated 650,000 people) at the Watkins Glen Festival in New York. 1974 saw the release of the retro collection Moondog Matinee and, after backing Dylan on Planet Waves, The Band co-headlined and backed him on a much-heralded reunion tour which resulted in Before The Flood. The Band's 1975 album Northern

Lights - Southern Cross, which included "Ophelia" and "It Makes No Difference" followed.

In 1976, The Band bade farewell to live performing with the gala "The Last Waltz" concert on Thanksgiving night. Guests such as Dylan, Eric Clapton, Muddy Waters, Van Morrison, Neil Young and Joni Mitchell joined the group at San Francisco's Winterland. The concert film, directed by Martin Scorsese, and a three-record box set, were released in 1978 and are considered landmarks in each medium. Islands (1977) was the final Band studio album with Robertson. He then produced Neil Diamond's Love At The Greek live album (the previous year he helmed Diamond's Beautiful Noise).

Long fascinated with film, Robertson co-wrote, produced, appeared in and composed the source music for Carny (1979), starring Gary Busey and Jodie Foster. One of the first rock 'n' rollers to seriously engage movie music, he followed up by creating and producing music for Scorsese's Raging Bull (1980), King Of Comedy (1983) and The Color Of Money (1986), which included "It's In The Way That You Use It" co-written with Clapton. For Taylor Hackford's film saluting Chuck Berry, Hail, Hail Rock & Roll, he was enlisted as creative consultant.

Robertson made his solo album debut with a 1987 self-titled effort featuring guests Peter Gabriel and U2 and the track "Somewhere Down The Crazy River." Certified gold and Grammy-nominated, the album swept the Junos (the Canadian equivalent of the Grammys). When The Band was inducted into the Juno Hall Of Fame, he reunited with the group for an awards ceremony performance. His second solo album, Storyville (1991), featured some of New Orleans' most respected musicians and earned two more Grammy nominations. Meanwhile, his "Broken Arrow" became a major hit for Rod Stewart.

In 1994, The Band was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and performed live at the ceremony. On the film front, Robertson scored Barry Levinson's Jimmy Hollywood and acted in The Crossing Guard, starring Jack Nicholson and directed by Sean Penn. On record, Music For "The Native Americans" from Robbie Robertson & The Red Road Ensemble contained songs from the soundtrack to the highly regarded television miniseries.

Robertson continued his multimedia activities in 1995 by producing the soundtrack album for Scorsese's Casino and being the subject of Going Home, a Disney Channel documentary highlighting his revisiting the moments, people and places of his musical past.

The next year, executive soundtrack producer Robertson heard a demo of "Change The World" and sent it to Clapton as a suggestion for Phenomenon, starring John Travolta. He enlisted Babyface to produce and "Change The World" won Grammys for Song of the Year and Record of the Year. Also in 1997, Robertson received a prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Songwriters.

His fourth solo album, the Grammy-nominated Contact From The Underworld Of Redboy (1998), inspired the one-hour PBS documentary Robbie Robertson: Making A Noise, which took viewers along on his journey back to the Six Nations Reservation, where his mother was born and raised and where Robertson spent his summers first learning to play guitar.

Robertson has since consulted for, produced or supervised music for numerous films, including American Beauty (1999), Any Given Sunday (1999), Gangs Of New York (2002), The Departed (2006) and Shutter Island (2009). In 2008, The Band was honored with the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award.

###

