

Narrative by Leigh Thomas

Responding to interview questions from @BreconIReviews

Mary Wood

The initial idea for *Higher Low* began like a lot of my songs, as a melody that forced its way to my consciousness from the ether at some random time and place.

Then, the process of actually writing the song takes place, which is much more deliberate although still very organic, as I let the song guide me along to take on a meaningful form. This means I'm influenced by my own experiences, thoughts, beliefs, emotions and observations.

Higher Low is definitely a reflection on my experiences and states of mind during the Pandemic where my previously quite stable way of life was completely shut down and my self-reliance had to be put aside.

With the live music scene wiped out, I hit a low point, and had to quickly focus my energies into new ways of functioning as a musician and try and work my way up again. This is the basic inspiration for the song.

On the production side of things, I collaborate with my son Sam. He's an incredibly talented artist and far more knowledgeable with the digital formats of recording and mixing than myself. I have complete faith and trust in him, which I think is so important when collaborating with a producer, and it means I am not fussing and stewing over a project, and over-cooking it, leaving it in his hands to finish the final mix, so when he tells me it's done, it's done!

Looking back on all of the songs I have written and recorded, it's pretty hard to choose a single favourite. I like some of them for completely varied reasons- Songs like *Miss Me* and *These Times* are really fun live songs to perform, and *Lightning* is a huge favourite of my live audiences so that is always fun. I do gravitate towards the songs that the listeners are most fond of as that is why I make music.

As a personal pet song, I like *A Thousand Years Old*. It has some personal lines in there and I like the melodies and feel of the song. It's a little bit like the type of music I have enjoyed over the years so I indulged in those elements with that song.

I have been into a vast array of music in my life, although as a singer and guitarist, most of the genres I have listened to have centred around the guitar-based pop/rock format. I have always been a Beatles fan since I was young, and admire their compositional quality and vocal abilities, and their versatility in presenting so many styles of music.

Other talented vocalists I admire are Jeff Buckley, Kate Bush and Kurt Cobain for their soulful and expressive deliveries, respectively. Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd are other favourites.

It has been bands I have been drawn to, and I have performed mostly in or with bands myself, although I have played many solo gigs too. For most of my own releases, I have written for a band format, and have recorded them as such.

This presents problems for me as I am a solo artist at this time, so I do not have other musicians to bounce ideas off or have more specialized inputs into a song's arrangement or composition. And performing the songs live means I either play acoustically, or I use the backing tracks lifted off my recordings to sing and play guitar. This, I prefer to do as it at least presents the songs in their intended light but does lack the stage presence and energy of a full band. Once things get back to some kind of normality in the live scene, and I will do bigger gigs or touring, I will definitely put a band together.

So, I am biding my time, and really staying focussed and prepared for such an event. This means the majority my time is devoted to my music, either writing, producing, practicing and live streaming, as well as networking and marketing. But being prepared also goes beyond this. I also see staying mentally and physically prepared as just as important, those aspects take up a lot of my time too. I try to get to the gym most days and spend time outdoors in the sun or in nature, at the beach and such. I also enjoy solitude and quiet and treat it as a kind of meditation whereby I can empty my mind and still the intruding thoughts. I find this particularly necessary for being creative. I have a van which is great for gigs, but also for getting away and living off the grid. I fitted it out with a kitchen, bed, cooker, solar power and fridge, so it's perfect for that. It's my only vehicle though, so for short trips I prefer just to ride my pushbike!

I like to be productive in some form or another so I hardly watch TV, a movie or documentary every now and then. I prefer to unwind with a glass of red wine, or a Martini, and enjoyable conversation.

Living in the moment describes my lifestyle. Sure, I have goals; I want to have more people hear and enjoy my music, perform it as often and as everywhere as I can, and keep improving my art, and exploring my musical creativeness and capabilities. But enjoying the journey is what matters to me. The future is written today, so that is what I focus on!