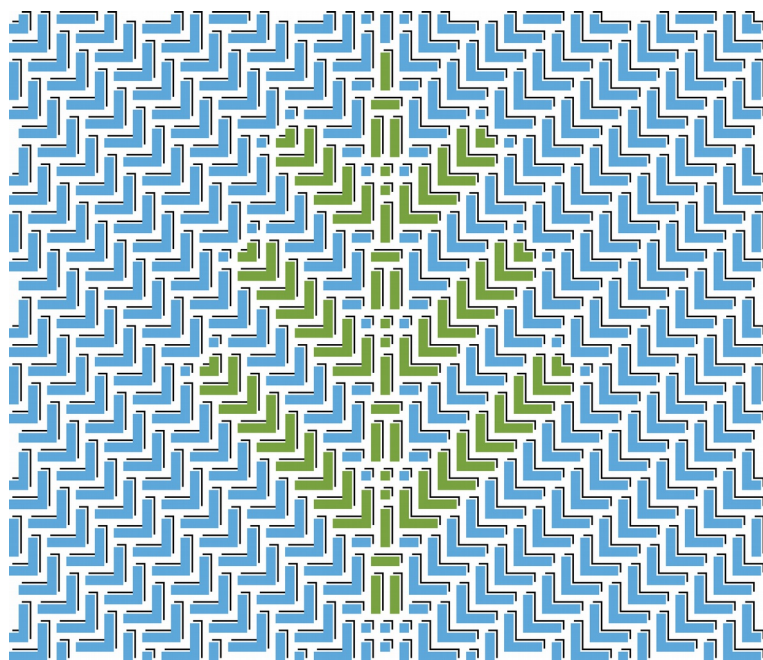

Stranger Still ~ *Songs of Bread, Wine and Salt*



Out: 27 April, 2019 on [All-Set! Editions](#)
(CD/ Digital)

Preview: [Stream](#) — [Download](#)

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|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Beginning</i> | 7. <i>The Word</i> |
| 2. <i>Christ</i> | 8. <i>Canadian January Night</i> |
| 3. <i>The Drunken Poet</i> | 9. <i>Canadian Love Song</i> |
| 4. <i>An Exchange of Gifts</i> | 10. <i>This Is What I Wanted</i> |
| 5. <i>July 15</i> | <i>To Sign Off With</i> |
| 6. <i>The Last Waltz</i> | 11. <i>Looking for Nancy</i> |

Mim Adams & Randi Helmers — vocals
Pete Johnston — acoustic & electric guitars, vocals
Rob Clutton — string bass

Music by Pete Johnston; Poetry by Alden Nowlan (1933-83)
Recorded at See Through Sound by Pete Johnston
Produced by Andrew Taylor & Pete Johnston; Mixed by Andrew Taylor; Mastered by Fedge
Artwork by Mike Smith; Liner notes by Brian Bartlett

Depending on your perspective, Toronto-based quartet **Stranger Still** is either deceptively odd or deceptively straightforward. *Songs of Bread, Wine and Salt*, the band's debut, is an homage to the poetry of lauded self-taught writer **Alden Nowlan**, who grew up in the same rural area of Nova Scotia as bandleader **Pete Johnston**.

Johnston's songs invite the warm immediacy of various folk traditions into a restless and eccentric minimalism. It's an idiom that complements the intimacy of Nowlan's texts and describes Johnston's relationship to them. Make no mistake — this is anything but down-home kitsch. As geometric as it is sentimental, and far more stylized than it is naturalistic, the album sees Johnston reckoning with his roots — finding their place within his rich, idiosyncratic musical language.

This recording represents quite the departure for Johnston, who is best known in jazz and improv orbits as a bassist, composer, and educator. After winning a Juno in 1999 as a member of the Johnny Favourite Swing Orchestra, he was one of the Somewhere There Creative Music Festival's artistic directors, while leading his own projects such as See Through Trio and See Through 5. Here, on what easily reads as his most candid effort to date, he's heard playing guitar — he even sings a little. Yet despite the notable stylistic shift, his cubist melodic signature is unmistakable, even when inhabiting these bonafide songs.

Vocalists Mim Adams and Randi Helmers' plainspoken, harmonized delivery might evoke anyone from the Roches (minus the goofy detours) to a more introspective Dirty Projectors, from Renaissance vocal music to a far-tidier Shaggs. As in all of the above cases, the instruments offer much more than mere decoration. Johnston's crystalline steel-string fretwork and occasional slide lyricism are anchored and punctuated by bassist Rob Clutton, another fixture in Toronto's jazz and experimental music communities. Together, they articulate a stark but ever-

shifting foundation off of which the vocal melodies ricochet in surprising, asymmetrical manners. And between these bold primary shapes, lies another world of near-subliminal nuance – delicate cascades of tone, plumes of guitar texture.

Stranger Still's debut traces a fruitful connection between Nowlan's gently rebellious literary approach, and the recalcitrant, folk-laden, and decidedly Canadian experimentalism that courses through the likes of Eric Chenaux, Martin Arnold, Allison Cameron, and even Jane Siberry.

~ Press Quotes ~

“The music of Stranger Still feels minimal in nature, but is maximal in effect... As a debut, it is a stunning, nuanced effort from a talented set of performers. 8/10”

– Bryon Hayes, Exclaim! Magazine

“The five electronic-and-acoustic hybrids on *Margins* pull into their orbit minimalism, funk, prog, krautrock, and, yes, even jazz as they unfold with the precision of a Swiss timepiece...Perhaps the biggest compliment that could be paid to Johnston and company is that *Margins* and by extension *See Through 5* sound pretty much unlike anything else out there at the moment.”

– Ron Schepper, Textura

“See Through Trio creates quietly involving, thoughtfully deliberated music. It's a ‘hear through’ trio, one in which every note of Ng's light, Lee Konitz like alto timbre and Gill and Johnston's sparse, linear work is in sharp relief.”

– Stuart Broomer, The Whole Note

~ Contact & Resources ~

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Robert Fulford (The National Post) – [On Alden Nowlan, a unique figure in Canadian literature born in poverty and raised in poetry](#)



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