

- 1) onwards 5.36
- 2) on the side of the angels 5.32
- 3) if there's a way 4.40
- 4) steeltown 5.58
- 5) the lady fair 5.13
- 6) heavy water 4.05
- 7) the moon is down 3.37
- 8) daddy's girl 4.08
- 9) sailor's song 4.07

so, there i was in vennesla (again), with a free afternoon before the show. As always in vennesla, I was hanging with Frankie (Rosaas), who's much too tall but other than that an okay guy.

Frank suggested a visit to the local Antique Train Museum to kill some time. Geek that i am, that sounded good to me.

I loved the place! All kinds of steam locomotives from the late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, plus an english-speaking guide to explain all the stuff – I always have a lot of questions, I like to know how things work.

Lying unnoticed (I hoped) and looking forlorn was Bolt. I might have asked permission, i don't remember, but the upshot is, Bolt went home in my pocket, where he still lives on roadtrips.

Bolt consented to the photo shoot that produced this album cover; he's patient and (usually) accomodating. He's better-looking than i am, and he IS steel. Or iron. Or something.

The next stop was bergen, norway. When I'm in bergen I try to connect with sigbjorn (Fjellheim), who is one crazy sonofabitch. Sigbjorn works in a hell-on-earth steelmill in odda (great name). He also got me a visitor's pass and a guide, and we watched an enormous – really huge, i mean – vat of titanium slag cook up to 1600 degrees celsius, and then, with help from some other lunatics, shoot across the room like a white-hot fireworks display. Tons of the stuff. There are some pictures here of that happening, which sigbjorn was kind enough to take for me.

I had 'retired' planet p after 'out in the rain' – that was a very positive (non-gloomy) record for the most part, and i thought it'd be cool to go out with a little redemption in my karma account –

now, I'm lazy. VERY lazy, and i hadn't planned on making any more records until something really compelling came up. I'd done my 'bucket list' – a christmas record

and two records of cover songs – and while making records is certainly better than working, i didn't have any plans to get back in the studio.

My visit to odda changed all that – i was 'shocked and stunned', as they say, by the sheer POWER of an operation like that, and the strength of the guys doing the dirty work.

I told sigbjorn that i wanted to make a record called 'steeltown', (and that Bolt was cool with it). We made plans for me to record some material in odda, in a cabin by the fjord, in the fall. These plans evaporated when i found out that the cabin wasn't heated (I mean central heating – i told you, I'm lazy) and had no wifi...

so, Bolt and I went home and started composing in my studio. This was more exciting than it sounds, it was my first session in this studio, Shorty Recorders: the Bunker. Actually, i take that back: it's like watching paint dry. I got 5 or 6 ideas roughed out, and left it for awhile.

I had played a festival in smola, norway, in august 2012. Doc was along, and he said 'you'll probably like the guitar player from the other band'. The 'other band' was TNT, and the guitar player, of course, ronnie le tekro. His performance knocked me out - no other way to put it – and we connected and had a very silly evening after the show. I told him about a new planet p record, got his email adress, and said he'd be hearing from me. Blah, blah, typical showbiz – I'm not sure he believed me – or remembered me, come to that.

after a few false starts, doc, bolt and I made it up to nyhagen, outside of oslo, way out in the boonies, where ronnie has his studio. We spent 6 weeks there in 2 ½ days, and ronnie played on 7 tracks for me. Just free-form stuff; when he's playing you just try to get it recorded and sort it out later – the exact opposite of a 'studio' musician. I'm a hopeless studio musician myself, but i could hear what i was getting. He would do 3-4 takes of each song, then on to the next one. Ronnie decided what instrument to play, and how and where to play it. I was just thinking 'thank you' every time he played something outrageous. And trying to stay out of his way.

I think I spent about 100 hours editing his takes... thanks for that, Spider.

Jimmy Durand and i have been working together since 2010, first for his band Zed Yago, and more recently we're looking at film and TV- music projects. He's a marvelous writer, and co-wrote three of these songs, which was a huge help. He also contributed most of the 'real drum' drums and a lot of the guitar work. We wrote 'sailor's song' in 2010, this will be its first real release, and just for the record: not only is it the 'redemption' song on 'steeltown'; it was also written before 'life of pi' – you'll get that reference if you've seen the movie and heard the song.

Sarge Svarstadt plays with me on the road, and gave me some great tracks: 'the moon is down' and a lot of 'heavy water'. Thanks, man, and don't be late for soundcheck. If I'M late,  
start without me.

Valery Lunichkin I met on facepage, and he's a great player. Sometimes all you gotta do is ask...

I spent april and may 2013 in the Bunker putting this all together. Music's easy (for me). Lyrics, on the other hand, are more important (again, to me) and writing them is like pulling teeth. Unfortunately, they're MY teeth – if they were yours i'd at least have had some laughs.

Doc is married to his right hand – (there's always a camera in it) and has a knack for being in the right place at the right time. Bluesville! We got a lot of great pics. It's tough to shoot Bolt sometimes, he mostly wears the same expression. As do I.

So, that's the backstory. Here's what we've got:

i wanted a record called 'steeltown' – catchy name, right? But what would it be about?

Well, basically it's about the Kingdom of Norway, with 3 recurring themes and one big theme.

The big theme is good, old-fashioned stubbornness, also known as 'courage' (but sometimes known as 'shitfaced'). The Viking Spirit, if you will.

I – and the rest of the world – deeply respect the norwegian Resistance during the Occupation, 1940 -45. 5 of these songs are about that, some loosely, some more specifically. I've borrowed from john steinbeck again (prizes if you can name the first time) for 'the moon is down', a book commissioned by the US government as propoganda and distributed covertly throughout europe. It's obvious from the names and the descriptions that steinbeck means norway in this little book, though he never gets that specific. Read it and occupy something!

'steeltown' is pretty obvious, it's working-class resentment and aristocratic disdain for the 'madman in the south'. Combined with some ass-kicking. In a word, Viking.

'heavy water' is of course the sabotage raid on telemark to destroy the deuterium factory there. Deuterium was a hot item in the Roaring Forties; it was a key ingredient in the then-theoretical atomic bomb. As it happens, norwegian TV is making a mini-series about telemark this year. That's probably just a coincidence. I'm not absolutely SURE that they're monitoring me.

As in any war, age and gender don't mean much. 'daddy's girl' reflects that, and also reminds me of the israeli army, where they seem to be 50% young (and very tough) women. here, it's the norwegian resistance.

'if there's a way' is a young couple trying to get to a neutral border – in this case sweden.

The second theme here is the eternal muslim/christian ritual bloodletting that every generation thinks started with them. 'onwards' is about the norwegian crusades, sort of – it's also about here and now. 'on the side of the angels' is about a very dark chapter in recent norwegian history, again 'sort of' – it's also universally applicable, just plug in your favorite idiot's name or nationality.

And, finally, 'sailor's song' and 'the lady fair' are nautical – and norway's got more water than a hothouse tomato. historically, 'lady fair' is about lady jane de belleville, a 14th – century badass French pirate, but hey: an HONOURARY Viking. 'sailor's song' isn't deep – not as deep as the atlantic, anyway – but to keep strong when your situation truly sucks is tough; *everybody's* strong when they're not sick, out of work, or in jail...

Keep listening and stay well!

Tony Carey (and Bolt)  
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