

Sam Evian
Plunge - BIO

It was New Years Eve 2022, the night before Sam Evian started recording *Plunge*, his fourth LP, now set for release on Flying Cloud Recordings via Thirty Tigers – his first album on his new imprint. He invited his friends and fellow musicians to his property in the Catskills, where he'd just painstakingly relocated and revamped his Flying Clouds Studios into a new barn on the property, restoring a vintage console and tape deck from 1974. Adrienne Lenker brought a jug of maple syrup from Vermont, Sufjan Stevens set off fireworks in the meadow, and at midnight, the group of friends cold-plunged into a nearby creek as it started snowing.

The next day, the *Plunge* sessions began, and the album was tracked in the early winter months of 2023 over a 10-day period. Joined by a group of his closest friends and collaborators (including Liam Kazar, Sean Mullins, El Kempner of Palehound and Adrienne Lenker of Big Thief), the young artist / producer set out with a wide-open approach. "No-one knew the songs or what the plan was. We kept it loose and fun. This was the spirit of the sessions. No headphones, no playback, minimal overdubs, or bleed. Fast and loose."

The result is Evian's best album to date: a cathartic rock record that melds power pop, iridescent guitar, raucous psychedelia, and Sam's now sought-after grooves. The music is both fresh and familiar, sonically inspired by his penchant for early 70s production and creatively propelled by the free-spirited process depicted in the Beatles documentary *Get Back*, as well as his urge to let go. "I spend so much time trying to make perfect recordings for everyone else," Evian remarks, "So it was a slight act of rebellion to make something wild and kind of fucked up for myself."

Evian asked Adrienne [Lenker, of Big Thief] to observe the first few days of recording and "bless the session." When they started tracking "Why Does It Take So Long," Adrienne suggested to Evian that he play bass and sing live at the same time– not an easy feat, singing and pacing the rhythm section. But Evian obliged in exchange for a guitar solo, and she agreed. "She kind of shapes the way the whole song came together and forced me out of my comfort zone, from letting the guitars do their thing to making me play bass and sing live...so that was the way we started the session."

Despite the adventurously live nature of the recording process, Evian came to the sessions with lyrical clarity and precision, and newfound confidence: "I wrote the songs so that I could just play them and sing them on a guitar. I wanted them to be like really focused, classic songs."

"I took a cold plunge everyday while I was writing and recording these songs throughout the winter of 2023. It put me in a mindset to go deeper and write about things in a way I haven't before. I was afraid at first, but just as a plunge starts with fear and settles into some kind of internal warmth, my writing followed."

Lyrically, *Plunge* is heavier than previous records. When Evian played the record for his partner Hannah Cohen, she was caught off guard, thinking it was about their relationship. In fact, it is inspired by his parents, who in their later years had the courage to drift apart to find themselves individually, before reconnecting, and reaffirming their love.

“These songs bounce back and forth between perspectives – my mom’s, my dad’s and mine. I was exploring the idea of the difference between coming and going, the idea of leaving so you can come back. Not to be Hallmark Card about it but, in a phrase, the theme of this album is ‘wherever you go, there you are.’”

Plunge is an album about family. It is an album about love. It is an album that required a tremendous amount of empathy and clarity on Sam’s part. It’s an homage to true love finding its way home, even if it takes a bit of a beating along the way.

His parents now live together again in a house in Woodstock, not too far from Flying Cloud Studios. His dad, a two-time cancer survivor, still makes music at 74, and sonically this album touches on a lot of music Sam and his father listened to and played together in Sam’s childhood homes, where guitars were stashed in every corner: The Beatles, Harry Nillson, George Harrison solo work, and other rock records from the 60s and 70s — many of which were incidentally connected to Upstate New York, where David Bowie, The Band and Levon Helm, Todd Rundgren and Jimi Hendrix all either made music, had houses, spent time, or swam in waterfalls.

That warm, live and fuzzy late 60s/70s sound is prevalent on *Plunge*, from the camaraderie of making the album to the technical aspects, including recording live to vintage tape, which removes the ability to over-scrutinize and over-edit. You have to go with the flow. *Plunge* finds that sweet spot between technological constraint and creative freedom. “We couldn’t get lost in options, so we let the songs find themselves.”

Plunge opens with three songs that explore family from different vantage points. Hypnotic opener “Wild Days” is an uplifting overture centered around an improvised guitar line and an ascending groove, with the plaintive narrator singing, “And my baby doesn’t know me / My baby doesn’t know why I’ve gone”

“Jacket,” opens with a tight guitar riff, Baroque pop elements and a strong nod to the Beatles. “It’s never too late, dear / to say that we’re forever more.”

“Rollin In,” is a breezy number that glides along a wave of Glen Campbell mid-tempo bliss, undulating with saxophone and Rhodes, both played by Sam. “It’s true. We’ve been in a better way. I slip through to a lonely part of the day.”

The rest of the album also touches on themes surrounding his family, from unearthing past traumas, to celebrating his parents’ creative influence on his life. The unbridled, “Why Does It Take So Long,” features Lenker’s wild guitar solo, while “Another Way” features El Kempner of

Palehound on guitar. “Runaway” demonstrates Evian’s newfound vocal confidence on *Plunge*, which finds him stepping out from “behind the curtain” and “projecting more than I ever have.” Album closer, “Stay,” written for Sam’s dad, is the Gram Parsons / John Lennon session we didn’t know we needed, while “Freakz” is an irreverent, funk-out album curveball, designed for a good time. And that’s just a taste of what Evian has cooked up here.

Plunge is Evian’s first release on his own imprint, Flying Cloud Recordings, the new imprint of his Catskills-based studio. In 2017 Sam Evian decamped to the Catskills alongside his partner Hannah Cohen and their dog, Jan, creating an immersive recording experience, Flying Cloud Studios, tucked away in the mountains of upstate New York. Evian (née Sam Owens) has hosted/produced/engineered a slew of artists in his home studio including Big Thief (Grammy-nominated for *Certainty*), Palehound, Kate Bollinger, Blonde Redhead, Helena Deland and more. *Plunge* is his fourth LP and first partnered with Thirty Tigers.

“A plunge starts with panic, fear, anxiety. Stick it out for a minute and a calm settles in. Your body has a willingness to survive in adverse conditions. It scuttles your blood around, releases adrenaline, endorphins and other chemicals that are all stashed away. Stick it out a bit longer - time slows down, you kind of disappear into breathing and feeling your body work to survive. The little stresses melt away. The big ones become smaller. It’s easier to see yourself and the life you’re living from a cold creek in winter.” - Sam Evian