

umbrellas

ILLUMINARE

(Latin; meaning to light the way or illustrate.)

When Scott Windsor and the timeless yet refreshing band **UMBRELLAS** released their debut self-titled record in 2005, they may not have guessed that one year later, they'd find themselves livening-up a drab, abandoned comedy club—recording songs on giant stages and in refrigerators for their follow-up, *Illuminare*. **UMBRELLAS** sophomore Militia Group release was recorded in two solid weeks of near fifteen-hour recording sessions, where Scott and his band's musings were tested and brought to life.

When **UMBRELLAS** debut hit the shelves, it was recognized as a dynamic, eager offering. The band toured heavily and new ideas began swimming inside Windsor's head. Those ideas formed icebergs—and the only option was to dismantle and re-conduct the near-avalanche of visions, abstractions, melodies and structures. The debut, birthed in decidedly artistic, collaborative ways, proved to be an even more cautious outing compared to *Illuminare*.

Hanging blankets as sound control across the empty, dusty and evocative shell of an old comedy club, Scott and his **UMBRELLAS** started tracking their new record *Illuminare*. They went forth in unsafe, less-than secure scenarios with nearby '06 tornados in Oklahoma. Scott recalls: "The old comedy club had an odd feel to it. Grossly low-lit, strange hallways, off-color backrooms good for nothing—right there in the middle of downtown Tulsa—dodging tornados in the midst of recording. We constantly heard sirens going off, went outside to piss-green skies, sideways rain and I thought to myself 'maybe they'll find these recordings someday after we were all carried off.' A band member's car was stolen during the recording process by homeless people who took it just to impress their friends. Our van also got broken into and backup hard-drive was stolen to add to the obstacles—but bad luck could not stop this record."

James McAlister (Ester Drang, Sufjan Stevens) played the drums, percussion, programming, and added lively, innovative ideas like sampling Scott's voice as the keyboard parts for the song

"Again and Again." On the song, Scott sings: "Where's the piano? The big, big bass drum?" Well, in that song, the piano's right there in his vocal chords—which were adamantly, angelically bared just as they are on *Illuminare*. "Most of these songs only had one take on vocals—around 80% of the record. Every record nowadays, it seems you can find some pretty blonde, put auto-tune on it and just go with it." Scott modestly adds: "I'm not the best singer but at least when you see us live, it's what you hear on the record." And it seems that's what the general mood and stance of this record: reality, and a sense for the organic, raw, forgotten sentiments. In the song "Tests on My Heart, Windsor sings of 'getting over the self,' recording in the aforementioned refrigerator with cold vocal-shadows and a Vaudevillian piano interlude. *Illuminare* grapples with notions of solitude, life, death, and the plain old blues. Scott sings of realistic love, infatuation, satisfaction, disappointment, life-balance, the letting-go, appeasement, idealism, and grace—all with a backdrop of blustery fall-out tunes with strange swirls of sound, smatterings of echoes and pulsings, huge bass hammerings and bells to chime the gladness in being right there where one's supposed to be. Weathering the storms, and taking on the shadows and memories of calmer times and warmer rooms.

The players: Chad Copelin (producer, keys, guitar, bass), Nathan Price (drums, percussion), Eric Arndt (bass), Scott Windsor (vocals, guitars, percussion) James McAlister (drums, percussion, programming), Ryan Lindsey (piano, background vocals)

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