

## Interview: Dean Carter "Songs Without Words Vol 2"

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Dean Carter is a UK-based musician who recently released his second album “Songs Without Words Vol.2” on the 24th of June. Serving as a follow-up to his debut album, Dean Carter uses his guitar to weave intricate tapestries of sound on this instrumental album that bring warmth to your ears as you listen to them. We reached out to him and he was kind enough to chat with us to give us an understanding as to how his gems are created!



**Hi Dean, thank you for taking the time to chat with us. Could you tell us about yourself and your musical journey?**

Long story...I'm a one-man-band guitarist singer songwriter now specializing in ambient-acoustic instrumentals on the one hand and songs on the other, all of which can be achieved now live with multilayered textures and combined lead/rhythm parts with a loop pedal. I use a classical nylon-strung guitar though as opposed to the more usual steel-strung acoustic—makes the sound unique I believe.

The ambient side in terms of recent releases come under the title 'Songs Without Words', and these pieces are acclaimed by critics for being generally calm and soothing or at least inward 'journeying' music for the listener. The songs have a pretty reflective content also but can vary in mood, and influenced by such greats as Cohen, Lennon, Dylan, Waters-Gilmour, Bowie, Sandy Denny and Nick Drake. Pete Townshend. Page and Plant. Peter Gabriel.

**Where are you from and how does that shape the way you craft your music?**

I hail from the West of England, and live not far from Glastonbury. This whole area is very rich in mystical/spiritual associations and this I think inevitably shows in the songs and instrumental. 'One August' on 'Songs Without Words/Towards Tomorrow', for example, is a musical portrait of Cadbury Castle—the true site of Camelot!

**What are your biggest inspirations as an artist?**

Aside from the artists cited above for songs, on the instrumental side are guitar and ambient music influences include Hackett/early Genesis, acoustic guitarists such as Davey Graham, Janch and Renbourn, 20th century guitar composers such as Hector Villa-Lobos and Leo Brower, and the ambient music of Brian Eno especially. Early Mike Oldfield.

**What is the one story behind a song or from your life that you feel your audience absolutely has to know?**

*The Muse comes and goes at times we just cannot choose—*

*how strange that that after all these years you find me fit to use.*

These are lyrics from 'Thine Is the Kingdom' one of the songs on 'Songs Without Words/Towards Tomorrow', and refer to the fact that due to illness I've had a slight 'lay-off' from the music business as such of 25 years!

In the 90s I was a feature of the free-festival scene and circuit with 4 album releases both under my own name as a singer-songwriter/bands, and with my project PSYCHOMUZAK, delivering chill-out lounge ambient electric guitar soundscapes. This all came to an end with ME—I couldn't even listen to music for about 10 years, let alone play.

My way out of the illness was through sound therapy and I became a practitioner of crystal and Tibetan singing bowls and voice overtone, founding [www.centreforpuresound.org](http://www.centreforpuresound.org) in 2006. It's only in the last few years that 'normal' music in terms of melodic and harmonic works and lyrics have started to come through again...so the lyrics cited above are a slight chiding of the Muse for such a long lay-off!

**Your latest album 'Songs Without Words, Vol 2' is out now on all major streaming platforms. What can you tell us about this album? How is this album related to its predecessor in terms of its themes?**

The first album of my new incarnation in the 21st century as a musician, 'Songs Without Words/Towards Tomorrow' was conceived as having two 'sides' (and may perhaps eventually come out on vinyl in this way), one of instrumentals one of songs—my model being Bowie's 'Low' and 'Heroes', which both featured a similar structure, the ambient instrumentals being created in collaboration with Brian Eno.

'Songs Without Words Vol II' is an all instrumental follow-up, and the songs follow-up scheduled for release on September 23rd this year is called 'Out Of The Loop'.

My sound consists exclusively of classical nylon strung acoustic guitar, multitracked in some cases, but in many cases the pieces are a one-pass solo. The one exception in terms of instrumentation on the album is 'Father Figures' which features a steel-strung acoustic in a tuning of my own devising, plus vocal overtone—a sound many people will not yet have encountered that I apply in my spiritual/healing work.

In fact in many ways I see the new instrumental music I am producing very much to be an extension of my healing with sound, taking the listener into a calm, relaxed state or meditative journey. This is especially true in the case of the album's longest piece 'Proliferation' lasting over 16 minutes.

Much of my writing these days both comes from, and is designed to take the listener into, the deeper brainwave states we associate with meditation and/or sleep. Some of the pieces are truly written in a 'dream-state' and I have to wake up and record what I have been given. For instance 'Music Box Waltz': I was woken in the middle of the night by the first part in D Minor, went back to sleep, only to then be given the second part, modulating to G Minor. I receive the music very clearly in specific keys, sometimes a little fragment, sometimes as in the case cited more extensively.

**What is the track you are most proud of on 'Songs Without Words, Vol 2'? Which track are you the least happy with?**

'Hyacinth' the opening track. In a meditation on her birthday last year I felt I had connected on a profound level with my mum who had passed away the previous year: I then walked into the music room took out the guitar and the tune that then came was just a continuation of this communion. My mother's name is Cynthia, usually shortened to 'Cynth'. So it was—'Hiya-Cynth!' My partner had also just given me a bowl of hyacinths that were around the altar where I meditate.

I'm not least-happy with anything—if I were I wouldn't release it. I'm grateful for the gift of every piece I've been given, all arriving in their various ways.

**What is an emerging trend in the indie music scene you despise? What trends do you see that you'd like to capitalise on?**

I would say I'm oblivious to all trends other than the trend I think or hope I can perceive in people that they ignore trends themselves and are interested truly in music, not herd-behaviour. That true interest always involves wishing to discover real music for oneself rather than accepting what we are being force-fed, and I think there's (refreshingly) an ever-growing number of people who simply are not interested in being told what to like, but want to find what's really out there.

**Tell us more about your creative process as an artist.**

Generally, now, as I say, the music comes in a dream state, literally while asleep, after a formal meditation, or even randomly.

Sometimes lyrics too. In the case of 'Thine Is The Kingdom' for example the opening lines were being sung to me in a dream by Sandy Denny! I then got up, sang it out loud, put chords to it, (in the dream she sang acappella). There's an album by the late great Kevin Ayers called 'Whatever she brings swesing': and that's kind of my artistic creed or motto now. Most mornings (including this very one upon which I'm answering these questions) on waking there's something in my mind I have to record.

Sometimes it's even something that at the time I'm not that impressed with. The opening chords of my song 'The Best You Can Do' came on the borderline of sleep and waking in this way and I lay there a long time thinking—'this is pretty average/boring stuff, I don't think I can be bothered putting this down'. But I got up and dutifully did, and as a sequence for some kind of punky, ranty lyrics it was OK: then I immediately had a contrasting, more melodic answering statement come through to follow it up. Thus we had a complete song-structure of the cal- and-answer/question-statement sort to work with, and the lyrics in their contrasting styles came later. So look out for this one on 'Out Of The Loop' when it comes out.

**How do you nurture your creative process? Have you ever experienced creative burnout? If so how did you overcome it?**

Interestingly I think all this has been answered from answers to the earlier questions.

**What does the future hold for Dean Carter? Where do you see yourself in the next, say 10 years?**

The material seems to be pouring through and while it is doing so, having been banked up for ¼ of a century in a holding pattern, I can only say I'm going to keep on bringing it down as much as possible.

As well as the as-yet-unreleased 'Out Of the Loop' I have written the material for a 'Songs Without Words Vol 3' taking as its theme the pagan 'Wheel Of The Year' which should be out once recorded early in 2024.

I also have enough material in terms of songs for a further TWO songs albums demoed, one of which will be called 'Celestial Light', featuring as the title track my treatment of Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode'.

Beyond that I don't have a crystal ball, I am committed to realizing the musical gifts I am currently being given. I could never have predicted at the end of the 90s that my musical life would simply stop, cease, come to an end. It was a sort of death. In my rebirth it was as a sound healer not as a normal musician that I was given another chance at life, I wasn't ever expecting 'normal' musical creativity, writing music and songs, to ever come back.

That it did so from around 2021 onwards has come as a surprise. That I've found a sustainable/feasible way of realizing it all just relying on myself and not having to deal with other people in a band etc...for the moment I'm pretty content with that.

Some of the songs I'm currently being sent though are beginning to beg for other parts, even other voices, and perhaps the addition of the dreaded 'bottom' end, like a rhythm section, so it's quite possible that future albums might demand a more communal approach when it comes to the realization of the work. All of which might require me to be less of a recluse than I have been for so long now that it's my natural state of functioning.

I have started gigging locally and generally have found people very open to the material when they get a chance to hear it, but it seems as much of a fight today as it was when I was running myself into the ground back in the 90s, so I am very aware that this time around whatever I do in terms of music should go hand in hand with sonic healing and well-being. No kind of 'success' is actually any kind of success if it comes at the price of one's mental or physical well-being...I'd have to be pretty stupid not to have learnt at least that much!