

# DAVID HUCKFELT

When the world's on fire and the seeds of division are sown throughout the land, music and ceremony have always held a sacred space for healing and renewal. *Room Enough, Time Enough*, only the second full-length solo record from singer-lyricist & folk activist **David Huckfelt** of The Pines, is a record about restoring balance: space and attention, peace and equality, redeeming the marginalized, and remembering the forgotten. It's a new expression of the ancient ritual and power of songs to weave a web of resilience and protection over our land, our loves, and our resistance, from a songwriter whose new solo endeavor is a present-moment plea for connection and compassion.

"The phrase '*Room Enough, Time Enough*' comes from a name the Navajo used to describe their ancestral homeland in northern Arizona and New Mexico, not far from where the record was made", **Huckfelt** says. "It's one of the most breathtaking and beautiful places in the country, where a person can hear themselves not-think, a place where every mesa and every rock is a god with a name and power. We are fortunate to even be allowed to pass through this land. Places like this are a paradox of vulnerability and resilience, and the geography of the desert is where and how this record was born." Featuring a collection of new original material seamlessly entwined with folk songs from deep in the American soil, "*Room Enough, Time Enough*" draws inspiration from such powerful protest records as Johnny Cash's "Bitter Tears" and Floyd Red Crow Westerman's "Custer Died For Your Sins"; records that open a trap door to a different version of America, and speak out against oppression while holding fast to beauty for beauty's sake.

In an all-out effort to find common ground, **Huckfelt's** friendships with a beautiful and diverse cast of musical voices across genres, including singular but oft-ignored Native American songwriters, form the basis of the new work. "I'm not Native, but for me, it wouldn't be a stretch at all to say that Indigenous thought, spirituality, and friendships spared me from being a casualty on the rocks of American Christianity. It's an undeserved mercy I long to repay in some way. For this record, I wanted to bring storytellers and voices that we have forgotten how to listen to into unison, without falling into nostalgia or idealism," **Huckfelt** says. "The idea is to build a wider tent and a longer table for collaboration across genre, race, class, with songs like Woody Guthrie said don't "tell you that you're born to lose" - songs that can help lead to healing and positive solutions. And just to let everyone be as wild and real as they are at heart." The record and the songs are primarily about protecting the spirits of vulnerable people and places, whosoever & wheresoever they may be. "I tried to bring together every strange, beautiful voice on the edges of the musical garden I live in; unlikely combos, unlikely people, unlikely songs, and urgent messages that have the power to help break the dark spell American has been under," says **Huckfelt**. "A record of spirit protection."

A brand new first-time father, **Huckfelt** and his partner welcomed a son Billy Niobrara into the world in March of 2020; while the songs and record were written with protecting and nurturing this new life in mind, they had no idea how desperate and dangerous their new world was about to become. "Having our son arrive just as the reality of the Covid-19 pandemic hit full-on was a crushing exercise in vulnerability; even now in mid-autumn, no one in our family has been able to meet Billy, and the risk around every turn is just menacing. Then, just as we were getting the hang of quarantine and isolation, George Floyd was murdered just a mile away from where we live."

As **Huckfelt** began putting the finishing touches on the record back home in Minneapolis, his city erupted in a revolutionary response to the systemic racism and police brutality with repercussions around the globe. "Minneapolis, this relatively quiet, bitter-cold, liberal city in the north lands holds a great deal of little-known history about the American experiment. The American Indian Movement was started here in the '60s to protest police brutality; Abraham Lincoln ordered the largest mass execution in US history near here, the Dakota 38 in Mankato in 1862. It's impossible to live in Minnesota and ignore the Indigenous history and resistance of this land, but the same should be said about all of the United States."

With decades of police brutality and racial discrimination as a foundation, Minneapolis exploded in May with the very best and the very worst that America has to offer. "While we had the largest multi-racial peaceful protests in the history of the country, we also had white supremacists from out of town driving around armed to the teeth and placing explosives in people's backyards and alleys. Friends of mine with Black Lives Matter signs in their yard woke up to hand-written notes saying "Take this sign down, or tonight we come back real quiet & burn you and your children while you sleep." Says **Huckfelt**, "The experience of watching your eight-week-old baby sleep in the window moonlight while helicopters, explosives, gunshots, and sirens rage all around you is unlike anything I've ever known. It became clear as I watched the Minneapolis Native American community join forces with Black Lives Matter and thousands of white allies that the time was now for everyone to do their part to make room for these marginalized voices and let them speak for themselves, they talk; we listen. As an artist and songwriter, my big hope is to create art that opens up room, time, & space for new narratives to arise. I think music has a special role to play in the healing."

In a career on the road less traveled that has found him sharing stages with a staggering diversity of artists: from Mavis Staples & Emmylou Harris, to Bon Iver & Arcade Fire, and more recently an impressive array of Native American musicians including John Trudell, Quiltman, Keith Secola, and Annie Humphrey, **Huckfelt** wanted to build a new musical community for this collection of songs. While his 2018 solo debut record "*Stranger Angels*" was written in complete isolation at Isle Royale National Park on Lake Superior just a few miles from the Canadian border, "*Room Enough, Time Enough*" was created in the borderlands of southern Arizona, in the musical mecca of Tucson, the high Sonoran Desert and one of the richest, most biodiverse ecosystems in the world. "Tucson was the perfect place to dig back in time before border walls, reservations & even statehood. It's the only city in America to have five flags flown above it: Spanish, Mexican, Confederate, United States and Arizona." He asked Tucson producer and multi-instrumentalist Gabriel Sullivan (XIXA) to open up Dust + Stone Studios to a host of friends, contemporaries, strangers, artists, outlaws, cowboys, and Native musicians: Ojibwe ambassador of Native Americana music Keith Secola, Tucson's own living songwriting legend Billy Sedlmayr, Giant Sand founder and head purveyor of the southwestern electric-fuzz border sound Howe Gelb; former Bob Dylan drummer Winston Watson, Arizona Blues Hall of Fame harmonica player Tom Walbank, and Calexico hired guns Connor Gallaher on pedal steel and Jon Villa on trumpet. Together with the unmatched vocal chants of John Trudell's constant collaborator & Warm Springs Nation Native singer Quiltman, these songs found their people and vice versa in a perfect storm of generosity, fierceness and compassion.

"After I got home, I knew the record wasn't quite finished, but I hadn't decided yet how to proceed. Then, after the first couple weeks of the virus and quarantine, I realized that every musician I knew and loved was at home with studio gear, looking for anything to do. I definitely had some work for them." **Huckfelt** tapped members of his Unarmed Forces band, and other Midwestern musical luminaries such as Iowa folk legend Greg Brown, Dave Simonett & Ryan Young (Trampled By Turtles), Pieta Brown, Jeremy Ylvisaker (Andrew Bird), J.T. Bates (Big Red Machine, Taylor Swift), Erik Koskinen, Michael Rossetto, and more to add the finishing touches to the record.

The music mirrors those timeless stories of that Southwestern geography: forgotten arroyos & empty washes, cliff dwellings and cave art, cowboys, Natives, outlaws & honest men telling the story of a place older than the concept of America. "This record focuses on what my friend Keith Secola likes to call "the marginal creatures", the extraordinary & strange beings at the fringe of our fields of vision, on the outskirts of the frame, off the internet and growing like wild, endangered flowers on the edge of the garden. Songs are like that too, and for this record I chose to lift up some songs and songwriters out on the fringes of the mainstream musical ecosystem." writes **Huckfelt**. Secola's hidden gem / healing song "Book of Life" is covered here for the first time, as is Lakota / South Dakota unsung Native American music hero Buddy Red Bow's song "Journey To the Spirit World". Billy Sedlmayr, a man who knows more than most about outlaws and redemption, and **Huckfelt** rewrote a public domain ballad both old and post-modern called "Cole Younger". And a deep-cut track from Patti Smith's debut record *Easter* makes an appearance here as well, "Ghost Dance", infused with new perspective from an Indigenous point of view with vocals by Secola & Quiltman. A breathless version of the classic country standard "A Satisfied Mind" features a duet with Greg Brown, and reminds us that wherever we place our treasure, our hearts will be there too.

The new original songs are peopled with the kind of imagery and insight that gives **Huckfelt** a singular voice and perspective among songwriters of his generation. Unpinned to any particular genre, the former theology student offers lyrics that speak to hope from every human angle; "Better To See the Face" a Zen Buddhist koan, conjures the calming power of true intimacy, face to face and heart to heart, banished so forcefully by the Covid 19 pandemic. "Gambler's Dharma" is a meditation on the skillfulness needed to navigate an oft-times capricious world of random chance, while "Land of Room Enough, Time Enough" speaks to how the human heart & imagination thrives best with enough space to roam. "Imaginesse" is a full-throated love song about beating the odds and not winding up a casualty on the gravel road of commitment. Says **Huckfelt**, "I feel that with this record I'm just getting started offering what I want to offer, giving what I want to give. The line from "Better To See the Face" might say it all for me - "you just spend your love like you're going out of style", because we all are. Every time I work with someone I love and admire, I'm humbled just to be taking part in the conversation about the strong medicine that can heal America. "*Room Enough, Time Enough*" is the next step in that ceremony."

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