

Artist: **EVA ACTON STOKES**

Album: **SYZYGY**

**EVA & The Story of the Album“SYZYGY”**

*“SYZYGY - a conjunction or opposition, especially of the moon with the sun.*

My parents loved classical, folk music and ‘popular’ music on the radio. They both played guitar also, and painted. As soon as I was able to hold a pencil, I tried to write lyrics. As soon as I was able to climb onto the bench by myself, I was at the piano. By age thirteen I was competing to perform with our city’s Symphony Orchestra. My teachers said I had potential to become a virtuoso concert performer, but I didn’t want to play other people’s music for the rest of my life, I wanted to write and play my own. I found out synthesizers existed and began to get into trouble for ditching school and hiding my report cards. My best friend and I would hitch-hike to the music store to play with the synthesizers. That’s where I met future Grammy winner, music production major and progressive rock bassist Gil Margaux Morales, who became my first mentor and producer. We still work together. We began recording my songs at the University’s recording studios at night. I couldn’t believe my father allowed this; he was very strict. I wasn’t even allowed to be in the same car with a boy, but for some reason Papa let me go off with a ‘college man’ to record at night, as long as my homework was done. Maybe he realized I was going to do it anyway.

But then Papa heard from the school and I was placed under house arrest, forbidden to see my friends outside of school. This was intolerable to me, so when I was fifteen I moved out and lived with relatives who also failed to control me. When I graduated, my father gave me the ‘haunted’ Steinway, but allowed me to sell it for cash so I could travel before college, which I never formally attended. Six days later I moved to Europe. Gil Margaux was in L.A. by then, working at a top recording studio with big ‘stars’. I could have followed him/her then, but I was finally free from the prison of childhood and wanted to see the world and live in England, where most of my favorite progressive rock bands came from. I got a record deal in London and traveled, playing wherever I went. This was easy because everyone in Europe had a piano. I never played covers. I also never had much money, but my fans supported me so I rarely had to get a job. I sent my first EP, produced by Pete Brown of CREAM fame, to Gil Margeaux in Los Angeles. He/she insisted I should move to L.A. and try for the ‘big time.’ Before long I was headlining at L.A. clubs and appearing on television. I was courted by major labels. During this time I was briefly married and gave birth to an amazing, precious baby boy. Legendary music biz executive Artie Mogull heard me at a club one night and moved me and my child into a penthouse apartment in Beverly Hills, where all the ‘cool kids’ lived. But after witnessing the misery of other young artists I knew who lost their creative freedom after innocently signing away their rights to others, I felt very strongly about doing my own thing if I could just figure out how to do it. To the astonishment and dismay of many, I shed the glamor of Hollywood like the ill-fitting garment it was and moved to the Mojave desert where I drank creosote tea and howled with the coyotes and learned how to record myself with the help of a young scientist, Eric Bamberg, who also arranged and played the horns on what would become the song “You Should Have Listened To Your Mother.” I wrote and recorded an album called ‘The Outer Limits’, which was then re-named ‘EvVa,’ re-produced, remixed and mastered by fellow desert-dweller David Scheffler.

Then I met Craig Austin (‘Pizza Guy’), whose father was the sound engineer for world-famous band Bachman Turner Overdrive (BTO), who convinced me to move to the glorious PNW with him. The move was very stressful. We had our now teenaged children with us. I felt isolated and had terrible culture shock. I tried to put a band together in Seattle, but it was difficult to find musicians who could or would play my music. I became very depressed and drank too much and went crazy and made everyone around me very unhappy. It was a dark time and I would say that I’m ashamed of my behavior but I felt like I had been kidnapped by Sasquatch (Craig) and turned into an exotic pet. I felt completely lost.

We had only been in WA for a year when I had a traumatic accident. We had decided to live in the mountains but were having a hard time finding a house. Our teenagers found an apartment, but we lived in the woods in our van until it got too cold. We were able to borrow a condo for a while. I was totally unprepared for the mountain weather. I was also insane, which made me reckless. I had a bad fall, breaking my left leg and crushing my ankle and foot. The night I fell, no one was around and there was a terrible snowstorm. I had to walk on my injuries back to our borrowed condo, where I was able to call Craig before passing out on the floor. There was no way to get to a hospital without extreme danger and expense. By the next morning we were literally buried in snow and the power went out. The storm went on forever. For the ten days we were without electricity I lay in the dark in agony, drinking NyQuil when the pain became too much. I knew that when and if I was able to go to the hospital things could get worse, so I had to help myself. I turned inward and ‘listened’ to my body. I sang love songs to my bones and wrapped myself in castor oil packs. The stress made my hair fall out in clumps and I was afraid it would never grow back (it did). I learned, with great astonishment and awe, about the body’s incredible ability to heal itself. We all know we heal, but we take it for granted and think it has something to do with doctors. Not true. Our bodies are constantly cleaning and renewing themselves and we barely notice, even though we are aware that our nails and hair keep growing and our bruises and scrapes go away. Because I had no pain killers I was able to feel the snaps and pops and intense heat as my bones put themselves back where they belonged. I felt the Life/God in me, healing me. It was not me and yet it was also me.

Craig and our teenagers were busy starting his business and could not stay with me, and no one else could get to where we were without snowmobiles or hiking the long path Craig dug daily in the deep snow to bring me food. He brought me crutches so I could get to the bathroom by myself. Every couple of days he had to lift me screaming into the tub and help me wash off the pain-sweat and re-apply the castor oil. Because I had no pain killers, I was very aware of the moment the shock and trauma changed to healing; I felt it. Excruciating physical pain became profoundly spiritual euphoria. I have always been intuitive, but now I became clairvoyant. New music began coming to me from another realm. When the power came back on, Craig arranged my recording tools around my couch so I could try to re-create what I was hearing. He came and went, but for the most part I was truly alone for the first time in my life. At first this horrified me, but soon I realized that the solitude, like the accident, was an enormous gift.

While I was writing the songs that became “Syzygy,” my mother died. She gave me the song “Pay It No Mind.” That song is my mother’s advice to me, from the world beyond this one. “The New Earth” was also a gift from that other place. “You Should Have Listened To Your Mother” felt like a message from the Living Earth herself, who wants her children to stop hurting each other so She can restore her natural balance. “Everything’s Like Snow” and “Saviors” are both based on the ‘paranoid theories’ one finds on the internet. “Man” is an attempt to describe the mysterious process of spiritual evolution. “Pray for Flame” is about relationships failing because we can’t accept ourselves. “Crown” is a mystery...

I am still healing from the PTSD. Sometimes its hard for me to leave the house. I still freak out a little on stairs. My injuries, though not life-threatening, were serious, and I’m not exactly young. When I felt like I could tolerate being moved on a sled to our van, we went to Bastyr in Seattle. They were blown away by my story, and asked me to talk to the students about my healing experience. The director of Bastyr got me an appointment with a foot specialist/surgeon. He also could not believe my story, and was amazed to tell me I did not need surgery, which I already knew. I am eternally grateful to the doctors, students, and staff at Bastyr for holding my hand through my long recovery.

While all this was going on I was recording the new songs and when I felt ready, I started looking for collaborators. Research on the ‘Seattle Scene’ led me to ‘Grunge Grandfather’ and legend Jack Endino, who turned out to be a magician and a genius and also an amazing guy with an amazing wife, Mia Katherine Boyle of MKB ULTRA, who is now my closest friend (after Craig, who put up with all my crap and took care of me and still loves me even when I’m being, um, difficult.) I put ads on Craigslist and bass genius Rick Jones magically appeared. Rick brought in his friend and long-time band-mate, drummer Jeff Lockhart. We got a game plan together and began to rehearse and record “Syzygy.”

And then suddenly in 2020, the whole world changed overnight. We decided to forge ahead, working remotely most of the time.

Years in the making, we are very happy and proud of this record, “Syzygy.” It was created under wild circumstances and some of it came from Heaven and some of it came from Earth. I love this album and I hope you love it too, and that the divine love I continue to experience is your experience also. May all of our suffering and hardship during this strange time bring us collectively to Self-Realization. We need to look beyond that which attempts to divide us. We are not separate from Nature nor from each other; quite the opposite. With this album we hope to inspire you to practice Love daily, for the benefit of all.

- Eva Acton Stokes

“SYZYGY” (2021)

Mixed/ Mastered by legendary producer and Grammy Award-winning engineer Jack Endino (Nirvana, Soundgarden) the album features her new band of veteran Seattle rockers bassist Rick Jones, drummer Jeff Lockhart, and Mia Katherine Boyle on support vocals.

With influences ranging from Tori Amos to ABBA, the album showcases her distinct vocal harmonies, blended with epic, theatrical melodies underneath storyteller lyrics that paint a moody landscape shining with hope, wisdom and vibrance on a distant horizon.

“SYZYGY” is Eva’s first studio album since 2015’s ethereal solo album, “The Outer Limits,” produced by David Scheffler.

**The “SYZYGY” live band is**:

Eva Acton Stokes – Vocals, Keyboards

Mia Katherine Boyle – Vocals

 Rick Jones – Bass, Vocals

 Jeff Lockhart – Drums

Chad Quist – Guitars, Vocals