

It might have been simple necessity or unexpected providence that brought together Janet Simpson and Will Stewart, two musicians whose individual backgrounds cover a wide geography and history. Prior to their eventual collaboration as a duo, Stewart found himself developing the sound of his Nashville-based country-soul band Willie and the Giant. Simpson's name was suggested as a contributor based on her extensive work with bands such as Wooden Wand, Delicate Cutters and Teen Getaway, and Simpson just so happened to be free that day to come by the studio to add some keys and vocals to some of Stewart's songs before catching a plane for a European tour with Wooden Wand.

In the following summer, Stewart e-mailed Simpson to see if she had any interest in writing together. It wasn't long before they began trading bits of songs back and forth through e-mail, offering suggestions and finding a common musical voice. As these e-mail conversations went on, they began to accumulate songs that felt as though they shared a singular vision. It was then that they met at Ol Elegante Studio in Birmingham, AL and shared their work with producer Lester Nuby in order to work out the nuances of what would become their self-titled debut.

They eventually roped in Nashville musician Scott Murray for his pedal steel work, aiming to wrest a shivering and emotional atmosphere from its strings rather than just a predictable twang. These sessions resulted in a fluid — occasionally forlorn but ultimately melodically capricious — set of songs that coalesced into their 2015 self-titled debut EP. Though the duo began their collaboration as virtual strangers, by the time they'd released this debut, they'd not only developed a deep musical rapport, but had also become great friends through their common zeal for music.

In the 3 years since that release, Stewart and Simpson have further developed their own particular language which has led them to *The Family*, an eight track record that shuffles and persuades and recalls the momentous grace of Mazzy Star as well as the wistful melancholy of Bonnie Prince Billy. Recorded and mixed by Lynn Bridges (Devendra Banhart, Future Elevators), and set for release on November 9, it's a testament to their own internal rhythmic mechanisms, aligned and functioning in perfect parallel compliment. Building on the duo's previous associations, these songs are open in their construction but guarded in their emotional extravagance, simple yet resonant in their revelation.

From the pastoral stroll of opener "Burying Ground" to the alt-country euphoria of closer "Move," the album offers brief glimpses into the shadows, light and beloved details of Stewart and Simpson's musical relationship — these songs are intimate and relay their catharsis through the give and take of each other's voices. "Shuttlecock" wrangles a gorgeous Mavericks-esque melody as "Colors" develops an eerie ambiance where you can almost hear the sound of embers dying in the early hours of the morning. "Downtown" trades brief bursts of distortion and shuddering strings to evoke peril and the loss of one's self, regardless of how we might choose to lose that identity.

Stewart and Simpson move mysteriously through this landscape of earnest longing and darkened emotional relapses; they aren't looking for unnecessarily complex ways in which to illuminate their reactions to the world and its reactions to them. They enjoy a more simplistic

approach, though not one without complexity. The Family is not overbearing in it's weight or gravity – it's an album of introspection and meticulous disclosure.

The Family is the sound of two people connecting on a primitive level, on an intuitive level, and making music that speaks not only to their own experiences but to those they've yet to have. Their past, present and the unknown machinations of their future collide into a startling outburst which takes you through haunted woods and foreboding cityscapes while supporting the muscles and echoes of your heart. Often it's the simple things which devastate us so easily, and Stewart and Simpson have tuned in to this particular emotional and musical wavelength with a precision and effortlessness few other artists ever manage to understand.

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