
ASTRAL BLESSING



Astral Blessing began life in a basement in Northampton, Massachusetts in 2001. Formed over a shared love of early-American folk music, communal jamming, and the droney bliss of Popol Vuh and Trad, Gras, Och Stenar, Astral Blessing blended folk-rock inflected songs with long, heavy improvised passages, adding a unique voice to the burgeoning western mass psych scene.

Created from the merging of two duo projects, Astral Blessing's sound united LaBrecque's delay-drenched guitar and Webb's haunting vocals, with Demaio's propulsive drumming, and Presnell's snaky telecaster riffs. While much of the Western Mass scene was exploring communal improvisation, and long-form freak-outs, Astral Blessing sought to channel these energies into loose song forms, half Appalachian, half heavy psych. Their live shows moved between these poles often in the same song.

Astral Blessing often shared the stage with kindred valley spirits such as MV & EE, Dred Foole, Sunburned Hand of the Man, as well as

touring acts like Mike Watt, Mick Harvey, and Elf Power. The band also performed at the now legendary Brattleboro Free Folk Festival organized by Matt Valentine.

The band parted ways after a short tour down the east coast with the Magik Markers in 2003, leaving behind a couple of small-run, self-released cdrs. LaBrecque and Webb joined Sunburned Hand of the Man, and released the stunning duo lp on Eclipse. Presnell and partner Jenni Pace relocated to New Orleans, formed Hildegard (and later, Von Bingen), and started releasing music on their Feed & Seed record label.

Oddly enough, in the years that followed the band's demise, Astral Blessing managed to achieve a small, cult following, mostly based on the myth and hear say of their live shows. James Tooth (aka Wooden Wand), having heard such rumors, approached the band after a rare reunion appearance at the Map of Moves festival in Asheville, North Carolina. This meeting resulted in Astral Blessing's first lp, issued on Mad Monk, which combined live recordings from Nashville in 2003, and Asheville in 2005, and won rave reviews from the likes of Julian Cope and Volcanic Tongue.

In 2007, Feed & Seed released St. Roch, a collection of recordings made mostly as a trio (Webb, LaBrecque, Presnell) while Presnell was living in New Orleans.

The quartet will reunite for the first time since their final show in Nashville 2003 to perform at the Festival of Endless Gratitude in Copenhagen in September 2010.

<http://www.feedandseedrecords.com/feed-seed-artists/astral-blessing/>
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