



Ford Corl and his friends: Clockwise from top, Shawn Sariti, Troy Elizaes, Corl and Adam Carpenter.

Dumb fun

Ford Corl

Way back in October of ye olde 2009, I met up with a local guy named Ford Corl to talk about *Acoustic Face*, his then new album. Here's part of what I wrote back then:

"*Acoustic Face* is a tribute to Corl's love of two crafts: songwriting and recording. The album's title is a reference to the acoustic guitar patterns at the heart of most of the songs, but every song is colored with tasteful electronic keyboard sounds, minimal percussion and other sounds."

That article was headlined "Solitary man," a reference to the fact that he recorded the album on his own, and that it was, more or less, a breakup album.

Corl's forthcoming album, *The Dumb Album*, is the work of a confident singer, songwriter and bandleader. In the 11 years since *Acoustic Face*, Corl has released three other albums and an EP—a steadily improving catalog of songs.

He also left his job at a local TV station to make soothing ambient videos at Healing HealthCare Systems (see "Moving pictures of health," A&C, January 16). He played bass briefly in a Radiohead-influenced band called Kadence, and helped spearhead *The Reno Sessions*, a video series, first online and then on PBS, documenting the Reno music scene. (Full disclosure: he made some videos of my band, although nobody made any money from the project.)

And perhaps most importantly, he managed to assemble one of the best live groups in the valley. The handful of shows they've played over the last couple of years have been fantastic multimedia events, with strange, spectacular sounds and videos, and top-notch musicianship from bassist Adam Carpenter (better known for his work with Moondog Matinee), guitarist Shawn

Sariti (who also played in Kadence), and drummer Troy Elizaes (who's been around the scene for while, in projects like Hate Recorder).

"I always enjoyed being alone in a room and coming up with something from scratch ... to create something from nothing," Corl said. This new record

is the first record he's made with his live band, and it sounds like a record by a band—not just a guy alone in his bedroom.

"I have to be really open to the idea that these songs are going somewhere that I could have never taken it before," Corl said. "It was finally me letting control go a little bit, which was a new experience for me because I'm not actually the best collaborator in the world."

The overall effect is a bit reminiscent of a New Wave band, like Devo, the Cars or Gary Numan, but it doesn't really sound like a total throwback. And despite the full band sound, the songs still sound like the imaginings of a genuine eccentric.

"The more extreme parts of my personality can just get embedded into those songs," Corl said. He's a mild-mannered guy in person and a weirdo in song. "I enjoy getting all those things out my brain. It's therapeutic, in a sense."

He decided to really lean into his strangest impulses for this record.

"I'm going to write the weirdest lyrics I've ever heard, and I don't really care if anyone understands them," he said. "And I was like, what's the stupidest, dumbest name of an album I can think of, and that just came to mind. ... I think seeing something called *The Dumb Album* requires further investigation. What the hell is this?"

A lot of the songs, he said, are about "abstract concepts."

"There are songs about the ebb and flow of emotion," he said. "There's an end to everything. If you're feeling really good, there's always going to be an end to that. If you're feeling really bad, there's always going to be an end to that."

But, despite exploring themes of alienation, aging and miscommunication, the overall effect of the album is uplifting.

"It feels like a fun one" Corl said.

"Like, when I hear it, I can hear the fun that we had. ... Can you hear the fun? The fun album." □

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