

# Face the Music: Fresh crop of music from four Maine artists

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By Aimsel Ponti

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As we head toward the one-year mark of this pandemic, I continue to be both thankful and awestruck by Maine musicians. Many have been harnessing this time of isolation and not being able to play live shows into creative bursts that have resulted in some exceptional new music. What's more, some of them have been quite candid and vulnerable about the paths that led them to the songs, which makes me appreciate their work all the more, because nothing is more electrifying to this fan than authenticity.

This week I'm highlighting recently released songs by four artists: Alice Limoges, Stephanie Atkins, Oshima Brothers and Jim Baumer.



Alice Limoges. *Photo by Andrew Todd*

## **'China We Don't Use,' by Alice Limoges**

Singer-songwriter Alice Limoges has been living in New York City for the past several years but has been riding out the pandemic here in Maine, specifically Rockland. She's been putting out music monthly via the fan-supported artist platform Patreon. Limoges' latest

release is the piano-based song “China We Don’t Use,” and it’s a deeply personal, introspective piece of music. The song is described in a press release as a metaphor for a romance put on hold while fulfilling the important roles of loving your family and yourself. Limoges opened up even further. “Last winter my brain was fighting itself. I spent a week doing a psychiatric outpatient program, got some tools and left feeling much better but still fragile like papery little moth wings.” Limoges’ muse has been shining bright, and her plan is to release a trio of EPs in the coming months. “Ironically, it’s been the best period of my life creatively and personally,” said Limoges.



Stephanie Atkins. *Photo by Petar Strbac*

### **‘Jane Doe,’ by Stephanie Atkins**

Along with being a singer-songwriter, Stephanie Atkins is also a teacher, mother and professional actress. She released her debut album, “Skinny Jean Bonfire,” in 2019 and is set to release her second, called “Promise Street,” this summer, if not sooner. For now, Atkins is releasing songs individually as singles as she finishes them. Keep an eye and ear out for “Looking Forward to Looking Back” and “Einstein’s Theory of Love.” For now you can enjoy “Jane Doe,” a firecracker of a song which Atkins said is commentary on how some women’s self-worth seems contingent upon the attention or sexual attraction of men. “Then when these Jane Does with their low self-esteem make unfortunate or impulsive choices to be with a man, they are often judged by others, most harshly by women,” said Atkins. “In contrast, in our society, men who seek the ‘company’ of women, right up to our previous president are ...

seen as ‘just a man being a man’ and that inappropriate and destructive water cooler talk is just ‘locker room talk,’ ” she expounded. Is Atkins angry? You bet. But the song is an upbeat and catchy pop tune you’ll find yourself singing along to as you musically squash the patriarchy.



Jamie and Sean Oshima. *Photo courtesy of Oshima Brothers*

### **‘Burning Earth,’ by Oshima Brothers**

Oshima Brothers is the sibling folk pop duo of Sean and Jamie Oshima. They recently moved from Belfast to Portland and are currently setting up a recording space and working on producing new music and videos. The brothers have been playing together since childhood (Sean is three years older than Jamie) and got serious about in in 2015, releasing their first album the following year. Several have followed, and next up is the EP “Dark ep.1,” scheduled for a March 26 release date. They’ve already released three singles from it, “Colorblind,” “Cadence” and, the latest, “Burning Earth.” The brothers are worried about our planet and voice their concern in a thoughtful tune peppered with electronic beats, bass lines and layered instrumentation that includes electric guitar and strings. It’s yet another superb example of their songwriting strength, creative arranging and persuasive vocals. The chorus of the song says it all:

*This burning earth is turning  
You are the rain  
Falling on dark nights  
And golden days*



Jim Baumer. *Photo by Mary Baumer*

### **‘All You Stupid Sheep,’ by Jim Baumer**

Singer-songwriter Jim Baumer has been living with profound grief since losing his son, Mark Baumer, just over four years ago. Mark, a 33-year-old activist, writer and Greely High School graduate, was walking barefoot across the country to raise awareness about climate change when he was stuck and killed by an SUV in Florida. “As his dad, my life was turned upside-down. During a particularly dark time following his death, I began playing the acoustic guitar I’d had for 20 years,” Baumer told me in an email. He also said that although he doesn’t consider himself to be an “accomplished” musician, the more he played, the more he craved playing and the more he began to experience a small measure of healing. Since 2019, Baumer has written 20 songs, most coming from a place of grief. “Additionally, I’ve been channeling some of my feelings about the world we’re living in. I guess you could say my music has a populist element to the writing.” Baumer released his debut EP “All You Stupid Sheep” last month. With some fuzzy guitar, some grungy, lo-fi sensibility and leaving-it-all-on-the-field lyrics, Baumer makes his mark with songs like “Living in this World,” “The Pain of Life” and one that takes aim at former President Trump called “National Disgrace.”

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