



The Antlers | Hospice (2009)

Reviewed by Ollie Sear

Forming in 2006 originally as a solo project of Peter Silberman (vocals & guitar), The Antlers is a Brooklyn band that initially released self produced albums by Peter Silberman himself, who cited Phil Elverum of *The Microphones* and *Mount Eerie* as a major influence towards self producing. Peter released two full LP albums (*Uprooted* and *In the Attic of the Universe*) as well as two EPs (*Cold War* and *New York Hospitals*) from 2006 to 2007. For the latter EP, Peter recruited Michael Lerner (drums & percussion) and Sharon Van Ette (vocals), soon after Michael joined the band along with Darby Cicci (trumpet & bowed banjo), turning The Antlers into more of a proper band than it had been beforehand.

Members



Peter Silberman

While Peter Silberman (31) moved to New York somewhere in 2006 to study for college, he began composing, writing and producing his own music under the name *The Antlers*, creating four albums from 2006 to 2008, and then another in February of 2017, named *Impermanence*. Out of all of his self created albums, *Impermanence* has been the only one released under his name instead of *The Antlers*.

Peter Silberman himself sings with quite a high range, leaning more to sounding wispy and emotional. Besides the voice, Silberman is the one playing the guitar you'd hear in his and *The Antlers'* music.



Michael Lerner

While I can scarp up very very minimal information about Michael Lerner, he's been playing drums for *The Antlers* since 2006, after joining briefly to collaborate on two of Peter's self released albums, *Cold Wars* and *New York Hospitals*.

Michael became interested in drumming early on in his life, and I mean early on. His first formal lessons started at age 5, and later studying at Hampshire College he studied with American jazz instrumentalist, Yusef Lateef; who Michael sources as his biggest influence as a drummer, as well as a person overall.

In an interview about their album *Burst Apart*, Michael explained that he had an interest in "things that had a hypnotic kind of trance-y side, that part of dance or house music."

Darby Cicci



From what I've seen about Darby, he's quite the character. Starting his own synth heavy solo project "School of Night" for his instrumental music. Darby will be the one playing keyboards, trumpet and the occasional banjo for *The Antlers'* music, joining the band in 2006 with Michael Lerner.

Hospice

On August 18th 2009, The Antlers released it's third LP album; a conceptual piece themed around the relationship between a hospice worker and a patient suffering from terminal bone cancer.

While Silberman has been quiet on the subject, he admitted that *Hospice* was autobiographical in nature, describing it as a detail of an emotionally abusive relationship.

Three singles were released from *Hospice*, those being "Bear" (released April 2009 to promote a self publishing of the album,) "Two" (released for digital download in June 2009) accompanied by a [music video](#) and finally a live recording of "Sylvia" (released March 2010) The second track of the album, "Kettering" hit some minimal mainstream success, being featured on shows like *The 100*, *Sense8*, and *Fear The Walking Dead*

Tracks

While I believe the songs are at their strongest when played chronologically and all have their own depth, double meanings and clever symbolism revealing story elements, I have a few favourites that I'd love to give their own spotlight.

“Bear” (Track #5)



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The first single for *Hospice*, and one of the more memorable songs on the album. “Bear” starts with a melody comparable to melodies of children’s songs such as “*Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*”, etc., bringing in the theme of children and pregnancy that plays into the story. But interestingly enough, “Bear” is the only track in *Hospice* that does not explicitly include the metaphor of the hospice worker and patient, leading most to speculate “Bear” is one of the more autobiographical songs on the album, if not the most.

“Two” (Track #7)



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Across another tracks from “Bear” is “Two”, the second single from *Hospice* and one of the most notable songs from the album, (the first song I personally think of when it comes to this album). “Two” details more of the personal life and struggles of the couple, nearing the end of the patient’s battle against their cancer. Narration in this song seems to skip from one to the other, truly being a song about two.

Instrumentally “Two” is one of the busier songs, creating a feeling of anxiety in the mess of lyrics and high tempo (in comparison to the rest of the tracklist) “Two” ends with a sound akin to a defibrillator reading a heart no longer beating, giving a pinpoint to the patient’s passing in the album for those that care to look for the details.

“Wake” (Track #9)



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A big jump into the second to last track, *Wake* is a great example of double meaning in titles that occurs throughout the album in one of the more obvious ways to pick up. While the beginning banks on the wake of a funeral, and the struggle as the protagonist/Silberman attempts to begin to let himself reclaim his social ability after Sylvia’s death/his breakup with his girlfriend. As the track nears the end it begins to take on a second meaning, an awakening from the nurse/Silberman keeping himself locked away to opening up and coming out from his hiding.

Accompanying Silberman’s vocals is a bass and choir-esque backup vocals that create a haunting mood supporting the crushing loneliness of the protagonist. Finally the choir pulls away to bring in a keyboard lead anthem-like chorus, signalling the beginning of a positive shift for the ending of the album.

If you're ever interested in taking an hour off to listen to an album worth shedding a few tears over, crack open *Hospice* on YouTube and taking it for a spin, I'd have to wrack my brain for another example of an album similar to *Hospice* in experience, and if you're interested enough in music to come this far for it, I'd recommend giving it a chance.

