

Scott Sullivan's "Great Manifestiny"

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above / "The Great Manifestiny" CD design by drummer Sean Donnell.

Scott Sullivan has a day job—and a talent—that is the envy of every snowboarder who has ever snapped a shutter. As a top-tier lensman, he travels the world's epic snowboard destinations, capturing the world's best riders and framing images that burn into our minds. But beyond his enviable gig, Sullivan's creative energy has long found another outlet—music.

Songwriting remained little more than a hobby for years for Scott. Then starting with *The Crushwater Symphony* in 2003, Sullivan's songs began to cultivate their own following in the snowboard world. His newly released follow-up, *The Great Manifestiny*, is primed to only add to this momentum.

For Sullivan, the allure of music has always been strong. "It's something that I've always just done. I started when I was 19 and since then, I've always written stuff, and a few years ago I said I just had to put it down. It just keeps coming up, and you just have to put it to bed. There is no pressure in it for me. It's just something I really enjoy doing—it's just in me. And I've been able to keep it on my own terms."

Immediately upon release, his songs started to find a place in shred flick soundtracks, with the first onscreen use of his music being Robot Food's "Afterbang." Since then, his songs have appeared in "Vivid," "Saturation," "Pop," "The Surfer's Journal TV Show" and "Five to Nine." This familiar venue has helped expose his music to a wider audience.

"You have to take stock of your resources of where you can get the stuff heard," he says. "That just makes the most sense for me since I'm already tied in with the media. I know all those people who are making the movies and they all need music for the movies. So it works out pretty well."

After initial exposure in "Afterbang," sales slowly started climbing for "The Crushwater Symphony." Sullivan eventually sold enough copies through his website to pay for the production, which he measures as a financial success. But more than hitting a comfortable break-even, he experienced a bigger reward.

"It's so satisfying to know that the music is getting out there like that. When you fall in love with a certain kind of music it helps you get through your life. And to be able to do that and reach people like that on the other side of the planet is just... mind-blowing," Sullivan says.

The new album—"The Great Manifestiny"—was recorded entirely at his friend Matt Remine's home-built and customized sound studio in Port Angeles, WA. Sullivan has been playing music with Remine—a NW shred veteran, audiophile and frequency Advertising Executive—for twelve years, and Matt played a key role in engineering the sound on the new album. With assistance from Matt's brother Pete on bass and keyboards, and

Sean Donnell on drums, the album was recorded in a four-day stint after last spring's Absinthe Film's trip to Alaska. Sullivan explains the recording regimen: "It's a crazy process to record an album. And the way I do it, traveling with the snowboard photography, since that's my main gig, I pretty much just have to do it when I can get it in there."

Although inhabiting board-sport culture reflexively evokes Jack Johnson comparisons, Sullivan bristles at the association. He pulls up Elliot Smith instead and describes "The Great Manifestiny" as, "Indie rock stuff, but good songs with good melodies and dynamic parts. The album works as a whole moving piece and the energy of the album reflects that. There are a lot of layers to the songs... They can be ambiguous, but they're not just throw-away lyrics, a lot of thought goes into them."

Sullivan readily admits his profession as a snowboard photographer does influence his musical output. "The traveling part and constantly being stimulated by new things... It just stimulates new songs and inspires me to play," he says.

And from a practical standpoint, that his irregular work schedule grants him time to work on refining his music.

"I'll get times when I'm up in Alaska and I'm shooting, but we'll have five down days," he says. "So, I'm able to take that time that the photography lets me do and sit down and record on cloudy days; whereas if I had a regular job, I wouldn't really be doing that so much."

Sullivan sums up, "The songs are really tied in with passion and following what you're passionate about. And I still love it [snowboarding] and I'm still passionate about making it my life and what I do. I feel the same way about music. They kind of just go hand in hand together. They definitely complement each other."

But he remains clear on his objectives, saying, "If I can just keep getting the music out there through videos and different alternate kinds of media, I think it can sustain itself. That's the whole idea of doing it in the first place, just getting it out there."

For the future, he sees a third album already starting to take shape. "There definitely will be another one coming, they won't really stop. Hopefully."

If you have heard Scott play in person, count yourself lucky, since live appearances have remained limited. He has played a number of underground snowboard events—from an Air-and-Style pre-party in a 1700s Austrian chalet to an Absinthe Films release party in Japan—but has no immediate plans to shift focus away from photography. He is, however, scheduled to play two southern California dates on the Glass Love Surf Premiere Tour. Both "The Crushwater Symphony" and "The Great Manifestiny" can be previewed and purchased at scottsullivanmusic.com.