



FIREWATER

THE GOLDEN HOUR

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In 2005, Firewater's Tod A embarked on what would become a three year sabbatical through the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent and South East Asia. He had recently split with his wife; George W. Bush had just been re-elected; New York, his home for the last 20 years, had become a cold and foreign place. He wasn't even sure he wanted to make music anymore. "I was extremely depressed. The NYC skyline looked like bad wallpaper to me. It was either kill myself or hit the road," he says. He put everything he owned in storage and left NYC with a few clothes and a laptop.

The journey Tod undertook would challenge him creatively in ways he couldn't have imagined in its planning stages. "I traveled overland starting in Delhi, India, across the Thar Desert, then through Rajasthan, onward through the Punjab, and into Pakistan," he recounts. "I had originally planned to continue overland through Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey, ending in Istanbul." But things didn't go exactly as planned. Along the way he was drugged, robbed, detained, and later struck down with severe intestinal problems. Travelers were disappearing along the road to Kabul. As Tod puts it, "I was forced to end my trip at the Khyber Pass on the Afghan border, due to general ill health and the unnerving likelihood of kidnapping."

Recording with a single microphone and a laptop in his pack, he captured performances with a vast array of musicians across India and Pakistan - and eventually Turkey and Israel. Bhangra and sufi percussion would form the basis for the songs he wrote along the way - songs about the world he left behind ("This Is My Life", "Electric City"), politics ("Borneo", "Hey Clown"), and dislocation ("6:45", "Feels like the End of the World"). Tod's acerbic wit shines on *The Golden Hour*, elucidating both the beauty and the absurdity of the world.

Firewater drummer Tamir Muskat (now also of Balkan Beat Box) produced, mixed and played on the album, along with a strange cast of characters from 5 different countries. Tod tells the story of *The Golden Hour* in a documentary that is included in enhanced format on the album. He also chronicled his experiences on his travel blog, *Postcards from the Other Side of the World*, <http://postcards.blogs.com/>.



The *Golden Hour* was released May 6, 2008 worldwide on Bloodshot Records. Firewater will tour EU in April - May 2009 and play extensive EU festivals Summer 2009. Tod is still homeless, living out of a suitcase, and he likes it that way.

FIREWATER SPRING EU TOUR 2009

Thu April 23	Bern, CH	Reitschule
Fri April 24	Pettenbach, AUT	Bauhof
Sat April 25	Pecs, HUN	PEN Festival
Sun April 26	Mezzago, ITA	Bloom
Mon April 27	Roma, ITA	Circolo Artisti
Tue April 28	Massa Carrara, ITA	Tago Mago
Wed April 29	Villafranca di Verona, ITA	Arci Kroen
Thu April 30	Cesena, ITA	Vidia Club
Fri May 01	Obertsdorf, DE	Hoobar
Sat May 02	Bergen, NOR	Bergenfest
Tue May 05	Den Haag, NL	Bevrijdingsfestival
Wed May 06	Berlin, DE	Kesselhaus
Thu May 07	Nürnberg, DE	DESI
Fri May 08	Thessaloniki, GR	Gaia Festival
Sat May 09	Athens, GR	Gaia Festival



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FIREWATER: A BRIEF HISTORY

Firewater was birthed in a Brooklyn basement in the long, hot summer of 1997. Depressed, broke, and desperate, ex-**Cop Shoot Cop** leader **Tod A** tossed away a major label deal and a free meal ticket to launch what--at the time--was a crazy proposition: a punk band fueled by gypsy and klezmer tunes. Tod had stumbled upon a dusty box of records and cassettes in a Russian junk shop on West 14th Street, and had fallen in love with the happy/sad conflict embodied in Eastern European melodies. He wanted to combine the mystery and melodrama of these tragic-comic sounds with the energy of his first love: punk rock.

When Firewater's first record, *Get Off The Cross (We Need the Wood for the Fire)*, came out, critics and fans were excited - and confused. The press was enthusiastic - but between the lines lay a lot of questions: How can we pigeon-hole this? What is this all about? However, ten years (and five records) later, Tod's crazy idea doesn't sound quite so crazy anymore. Bands as diverse as **Gogol Bordello**, **Balkan Beat Box** and **Beirut** owe a debt to his early adventurousness. In the meantime, the internet has opened the ears of millions of people to music from around the world.

Firewater's music has never fit very well into pre-fabricated boxes. A compulsive traveler, Tod has always been inspired by the stories, people, and music of the places he has visited. The records that followed (*The Ponzi Scheme*, *Psychopharmacology*, *The Man on the Burning Tightrope*, *Songs We Should Have Written*) were musical mash-ups that threw together flavors as seemingly disparate as spy jazz, ska, classic Bollywood, salsa, cabaret, Mexican banda, and Russian folk--to create a distinctive brew that was always 100% Firewater.

Every interesting development in music has been the result of clashing cultures -- of mash-ups: the Rom ('gypsies') migrated from India through Eastern Europe to infuse Balkan music; Iberian ideas fused with indigenous South American tunes to form tango and mambo and meringue; the American shotgun marriage of Saharan blues and English folksongs gave birth to rock'n'roll -- these are but three of many examples. Firewater has always fed on these strange amalgamations. "It's a bit like being a mad scientist," Tod says. "You mix a bit of this with some of that. You're never

sure what's going to happen". Not every experiment is successful. "But I'd rather blow up the laboratory than keep reinventing the wheel." Some songs have been flawed, over-the-top, even brutal. But they always seem to capture some humor and beauty. Through Firewater's canon runs a jagged line of lyrical intellect and unrelenting emotional honesty.

Never one to rest on a gimmick, Tod is constantly challenging himself and his fans by musically re-inventing the band. Neither strictly "solo project" nor "rock group", Firewater could best be described as a loose

musical collective. A steady stream of diverse talent has flowed through Firewater's open doors. Members over the years have included **Duane Denison (Jesus Lizard)**, **Jennifer Charles (Elysian Fields)**, **Oren Kaplan (Gogol Bordello)**, and **Tamir Muskat (Balkan Beat Box)**. Firewater will never revert to a mere formula. "I think there will always be people that would rather be surprised, instead of just satiated."

