



As someone who came to Austin in 1973 to write about music, Armadillo World Headquarters was graduate school, exposing me to more different sounds than I knew existed, from Mance Lipscomb, Greezy Wheels, Joe Ely, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Doug Sahm, Freddy Fender, and Roky Erickson to the Clash, Elvis Costello, Talking Heads, the Ramones, AC-DC, Parliament-

Funkadelic, Old and New Dreams (the quartet that backed Ornette Coleman on the groundbreaking album "Shapes of Jazz to Come"), Phil Woods, Herb Ellis and Barney Kessel.

Years after the Armadillo closed its doors on New Year's Eve, 1980, I learned its back story – how it operated as a collective, how each person who worked there had a role, how it was always hanging by a thread financially over its 10 years of existence, and how the people who ran the place were really in it for the music. A key figure was Hank Alrich, who found money to keep the institution running more than once and who captained the ship over its final five years. Above all, Hank was the music guy, the one who built a recording studio on premises and ran the Armadillo Records label while playing in an array of musical ensembles.

When the Dillo closed, Hank retreated to a remote cabin in the mountains of northern California and continued to make music with his family and friends. For Hank's daughter, Shaidri, making music was second nature, since she grew up singing and playing guitar and fiddle. She and her father played as a duo around Plumas County during her teenage years and developed a fervent following until she struck out on her own at the age of 17 – her own graduate school of music, such as it was.

Whenever she returned home, Hank and Shaidri would play music together. After performing at an open mic night sponsored by the Plumas Arts organization, people asked if they had a CD recording to buy.

“She came through in the spring of 2007 and obviously she had been singing a lot and getting back into her fiddle,” Hank said. “We did some casual recording just for fun, and I gave her a couple of new-old songs, including ‘Darlin,’ ‘Don't Wait Up for Me Tonight’ and one of mine that I wrote ages ago but had forgotten about, ‘Davis Brown,’ a tragic faux-folk ballad.

“She came through again in April of 2008, having decided to move from Lexington, Kentucky,” Hank said. “She thought of heading back to Juneau, Alaska, but also began to think about coming to Austin, where she was born.”

Shaidri moved to Austin that May. When Hank showed up, they started playing gigs at the storied Threadgill's Old #1, the spiritual heir to the Armadillo where Janis Joplin came of age as a singer. Audience requests led to more talk of recording and finally, talk turned to reality when Fletcher Clark (another Armadillo vet who was head of the Dillo's most storied house band, Balcones Fault) stepped in to oversee the project. Cellist Doug Harman was brought in to anchor the bottom.

Over the course of three days in November 2009, this album happened. It marks not only the rebirth of Armadillo Records and its sibling publishing company, Armadillo Music, but the debut recording of a daughter-father duo whose dedication and determination to make music on their own terms – *music for music's sake* – shines through.

It's about time. But the wait, as you will hear, was well-worth it. Graduate school never sounded this good.

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