

## hey rosetta! | tim baker

Seeds, Hey Rosetta!'s third album was released to a chorus of critical and popular acclaim resulting in a frenzy of downloading among fans. In reflecting on the title, frontman and multi-instrumentalist Tim Baker says, "In a way it's about what our lives had become, and how we're like seeds that float around into different fields and cities, bringing something... for the people that come to see us."

The seeds of Tim Baker's career as a musician were planted many years ago. Growing up was an experience of growing musically for Tim. He studied classical piano; he sang in choirs, including the renowned and demanding Shalloway Youth Choir; and he played in bands. It seemed inevitable that he would study music in university. Unfortunately, extensive practice caused Tim to develop tendonitis. Instead of majoring in piano, he took an alternate route and studied sociology and creative writing at Concordia University in Montreal. However, the music was in him and he wrote songs and continued to play.

After graduation Tim returned to St. John's with his songs. It seemed natural to form a band so with former high school classmate, Josh Ward (bassist), along with Adam Hogan (guitar) and others, Hey Rosetta! was born in 2005. Today the band also includes Romesh Thavanathan (cello), Kinley Dowling (violin), and Phil Maloney (drums). Like Tim, all of the band members have extensive musical training and experiences.

Hey Rosetta!'s complex and sophisticated sound had instant appeal. The fan base began to build immediately. People responded enthusiastically to the orchestrations that featured cello and violin. Tim's creative writing skill and talent are evident in the intricate, poetic lyrics that challenge the listener to think, to wonder and to imagine. Their lives shows are electric with a depth and intensity that bring the audience to shared spaces that the collective spirit yearns for and finds in Hey Rosetta!

Even the band's name is a challenge in meaning. It harkens back to the famous Rosetta stone that unlocked the secrets of ancient Egypt. Hey Rosetta! in its music and lyrics explores meaning, emotion and experience and ultimately the secrets of the shared knowledge of humanity.

Music is an art and the creation of art is a process that is neither scientific nor mechanical. It does, however, involve discipline, time and work as well as talent. Tim is unsure of how to describe the song writing process. It remains somewhat of a mystery even to him. It involves sitting with his piano or guitar sorting through notes to arrive at a melody to complement an idea or statement that will be developed in the lyrics. The music business involves hard work on many levels, not the least of which is the challenge of touring. From their first tour in a little blue van to today's cross country and international treks taking the band as far away as Australia, touring is rewarding but challenging. This is especially so in winter; Tim says that touring often means cold feet (literally) and coffee. It means sleeping on buses, in ferry terminals, and in airport lounges. Sometimes it means not knowing where you are.

Touring as a band from the eastern most point on the island of Newfoundland brings additional challenges in distance, time and expense. Bands need capital to assist with the expenses of touring as well as of producing and marketing the music. Tim says that over the years the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council and Music Newfoundland and Labrador have been supportive of the

band's ventures.

On the national level, the Foundation Assisting Canadian Talent on Recordings (FACTOR) and the Radio Starmaker Fund have provided assistance with marketing and label expenses. Bands have many expenses but correspondingly they also generate revenue from various sources. Cd sales, downloads, royalties from airplay, show ticket sales, merchandise, and synchronization - that is playing music for TV shows and movies - all contribute to the cheque on payday.

Band members, however, also need to agree on how revenues are shared. They need a band agreement which sets out a formula for the division of profits from the various revenue sources. These agreements and their attendant terms and formulas vary from band to band but a good agreement is essential for preventing misunderstandings among band members. The band members are professional musicians and although the first priority is their art, they understand that music is a business. It is not surprising then that Romesh actually researched and prepared a business plan for a musical group for his high school entrepreneurship course. The seeds of the music business were planted early for these musicians.

In fact, Hey Rosetta! is incorporated and it runs the same way as any other small to mid-sized business. It has a manager, Jason Burns, who keeps everything in running order. He looks after the tour program, transportation, accounting and financial issues, promotion and marketing strategies and other matters necessary to keep the band thriving. Jason was once a musician himself sharing gigs with Hey Rosetta! Jason found that he was handling the bookings for himself and Hey Rosetta! and other bands, so he formalized it and became a manager capitalizing on his educational background in marketing and media communications. Jason says that a band, like any successful business, requires a tight business plan, realistic budgets and the right people both in making the music and supporting the musicians. In addition to a manager, Hey Rosetta! also has a front house technician and a lighting technician. Booking agents are engaged for different regions of Canada and other countries. Publicists schedule interviews and appearances. Technical people are needed to set up for shows and to create and maintain the band's webpage and social media pages among other tasks. Graphic artists design album covers. There is a lot to be done.

Marketing is important to the success of any business and Hey Rosetta! is no exception. It involves advertising, publicity, interviews and appearances as well as song play and promotions on the radio. The band has carefully cultivated its image. It is concerned that promoters request that radio stations play their music with appropriate promotional introductions. For example, the song "Welcome" is about the anticipation of a new baby, a new life. Promotional introductions to that song should reflect a sensibility compatible with the song. The band also has an extensive and interactive webpage with an archive of photos and videos and links to Twitter and Facebook. Fans can also purchase music directly from the site. In addition, Tim also writes a blog commenting on the band's music, the shows and life on tour. The band members of Hey Rosetta! are musicians with a shared social conscience. Their website contains links to other sites and films that document the importance of seeds and biodiversity to the world's food supply. Again they present a challenge to their fans not to simply enjoy the experience of their music but to engage with the possibilities of the meanings of Seeds on a socio-political level. Hey Rosetta! challenges complacency and indifference. Hey Rosetta! has had much success. They have received many prestigious awards and nominations, among them a nomination for the coveted Polaris Prize and a \$25,000 Verge

Music Award for Album of the Year. Their single "Red Heart" was featured in the 2010 Olympics Montage video. They have a growing fan base. These fans anticipate more awards and accolades for the band.

Hey Rosetta! will continue to grow, to blossom and to feed the spirits of its audiences. Tim thinks of songs as seeds. "These little things, these little images or musical moments that can, hopefully, take root in people's minds and grow into something more meaningful... sort of become part of something bigger than what they are".

These musical moments that Hey Rosetta! shares with its listeners are taking root just as the band is taking root in the hearts of music lovers across the country and beyond. The seeds of Hey Rosetta!'s success were planted years ago and are cultivated with hard work, discipline and passion by each of its members. These band members have each become part of something bigger. They are Hey Rosetta!