

## Rusted Root Bio

MICHAEL GLABICKI - lead vocals, guitar  
JENN WERTZ - vocals, guitars, percussion  
LIZ BERLIN - vocals, guitars, percussion  
JIM DONOVAN - drums, percussion, vocals  
PATRICK NORMAN - bass, guitar, baritone, vocals, percussion  
JOHN BUYNACK - electric guitar, percussioin, flute

"A song is an organism that has a history and has different meanings to many different people," says Rusted Root lead vocalist-guitarist-songwriter Michael Glabicki. "Those people attach themselves to this organism and because of that, it's a ritual, a way to jointly go places."

It's funny; the same can be said for Rusted Root.

The Pittsburgh sextet evolved from a single cellæGlabickiæinto a musical organism of quintessential essence, monumental substance and vast appeal. Its fourth record, *Welcome To My Party*, is a further, astonishing progression; a distillation of chops and songwriting finesse revealing a distinct musical force.

Produced by Bill Bottrell (Tom Petty, Sheryl Crow and Rusted's platinum *When I Woke*), *Welcome...* features eight compositions from Glabicki, one each from vocalists Liz Berlin and recent reenlistment Jenn Wertz, and opens with the funky, percolating "Union 7," the first ever 50-50 lyrical collab between Wertz and Glabicki. These songs capture the essence of a band that is truly a single, thriving organism.

And what is that essence? After a long pause, Glabicki says, "For me, it really comes down to the songs. At this stage of the game, I knew some faults we had in the past. It was a conscious decision to make sure the songs were kept in the forefront and that the band could still do what they do in and around those songs at the right moment."

Rusted Root has songs. It was evident from the beginning with *When I Woke*'s smash single "Send Me On My Way," and is stunningly clear with *Welcome...* From the title track, a pinnacle of pop balladry, to Berlin's sunny, reggae-inflected "Too Much;" the shimmering Saturday afternoon vibe of "Hands Are Law;" Wertz's sexy, sinewy rave-up, "Weave;" and the supple Glabicki-Wertz duet "Blue Diamonds," Rusted Root has created a true representation of their every facet.

"Diamonds," is especially remarkable, as it pertains to an accident from Glabicki's childhood. "When I was two-and-a-half years old I was hit by a car and in my unconsciousness, I met this sort of being and she's been by me ever since. We'd sort of have that kind of a deal where she's gonna stick around. It's kind of a love song about that. A love song about an angel."

Welcome...differs from other Rusted records in that it lacks a drum instrumental. Instead, there is "People Of My Village," a thumping, techno-tinged track that nevertheless showcases drummer Jim Donovan's talents (he being a renowned drum clinician and solo artist), including newly acquired computer skills. "I had just started to use my computer as a brand new instrument and it opened me up to a zillion rhythmic possibilities I could have never played on my own. The song is tremendous. It relates to everything we've done in the past but sounds new. That's why I love playing with this band. It's always about pushing boundaries and not putting ourselves in a box."

To that end, Rusted Root approached production differently. Bottrell came in after a four-month preproduction period and spent the first week observing. Says Glabicki, "We had developed our own recording skills and methods, so he just sat in and watched how we worked, which I thought showed his wisdom and enthusiasm. He was willing to feed our process and we brought out things in each other that I think we are all thankful for."

"Root's studio skills have sharpened considerably since I last produced them," says Bottrell. "What has remained unchanged is their live show. Now they're unstoppable."

Welcome to My Party comes after a year off, which the band members used to explore other creative vectors. "We'd reached a point in our creativity where it was just time to examine other musical avenues," reveals Glabicki. "It was a little scary at first; kind of intriguing. We had never done it."

When the band reconnected, heads were clear and there was an electric sense of renewal. "I'd found some new songs and I knew I wanted to do a majority of them with the band," he says. "We just all got together and started jamming and it inspired me to take certain songs in different directions." He pauses, then elaborates, "Sometimes when you're having...in a song, an emotion, your friends can show you different ways of expressing it."

But one thing a person, rather a was missing. He explains: "I really wanted and perhaps, even needed, Jenn to come back." Wertz had left Rusted Root after the release of When I Woke, but continued her songwriting and fronted several solo projects. She and Glabicki began hanging out together again, drinking and talking music, bouncing ideas off each other, and he asked her to return.

"We talked about it a lot," she says, "in terms of 'let's make it a lot of fun and do it right this time.' We made a pact to do that." Wertz joined the band for one show in summer 2000 and says it "just felt really great." The audience welcomed her warmly and one show flowed into an album.

Glabicki founded Rusted Root upon returning from a post-high school trip to South America in 1988. After a false start with one group of musicians, he called Berlin, an old friend with whom he'd collaborated previously, and asked her to sing with him. Through her came drummer Donovan, with whom she'd taken an African drumming class a this being a prerequisite Glabicki had established. Donovan recruited Norman, another

classmate, to play guitar (he'd later switch to bass guitar, helping shape Rusted Root's rhythm-centric sound). A year later, multi-instrumentalist, visual artist and bicycle messenger John Buynak and vocalist Jenn Wertz, originally hired to photograph the group, signed on. Buynak's distinctive artwork would give Rusted Root a strong visual image.

Rusted Root would adopt a hard-touring way, their polyrhythmic multiculti rock and soul picking up devotees like a junkyard magnet as they swept across the nation. In 1990, they self-released a CD, *Cruel Sun*. The disc attracted Mercury Records which signed the band and released *When I Woke* (1994). Two more records (*Remember* in 1996 and the self-titled third in 1998), three EPs (*Evil Ways*, *Live*, and *Airplane*), a home video (*Rusted Root Live*) and miscellaneous film and TV soundtrack credits (*Twister*, *Mathilda*, *Home For the Holidays*, *Party of Five*, *Homicide* and the upcoming animated feature, *Ice Age*) followed. *Welcome To My Party* is the icing.

"It was a conscious effort to take our time and not let anything interfere with that process," says Glabicki. "We made sure that every element of the songs and the music were well maintained and brought into the spotlight." Norman sums up it up well: "Rusted Root has always been a beautiful collaborative effort all around. It's a pleasure just to create music together."