



KOWTOW POPOF, a singer/songwriter from the Washington, DC area, released his new album, "Tastes Like Armageddon," to coincide roughly with the end of the Mayan 13th b'ak'tun, December 21, 2012, interpreted by some as the end of the world. Over the past year, Kowtow conducted his Countdown to Armageddon, each day featuring online a photo of a t-shirt from his extensive collection, with each tee accompanied by a song from Kowtow's repertoire and a bit of trivia relevant to that day. Milestones were celebrated by a trivia contest where the winner received Kowtow's back catalog on CD or an Official T-Shirt of the Countdown, otherwise known as the "Black T."

KOWTOWPOPOF.COM

KOWTOW POPOF'S TASTES LIKE ARMAGEDDON

The Mayans might have predicted the date of the end of the world, but in matters of taste they deferred to singer-songwriter **Kowtow Popof**.

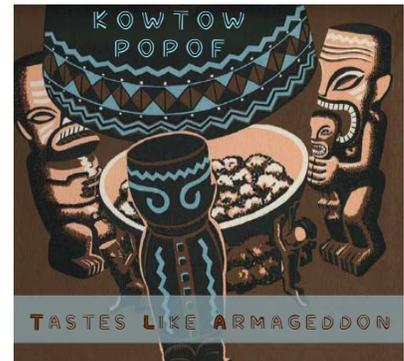
And it's a good thing they did. Popof's new album, *Tastes Like Armageddon*, addresses cataclysms personal and universal, burrowing into the heart and mind with earworms, thoughts, and beats. Arcane yet poppy, *Armageddon* is original and accessible, a "modern rock" album in the literal sense. From "Ataraxis (I Brake for Squirrels)," a call for kindness in the face of extremism, to "Alectryon at the Door," a spooky meditation that sounds like a sleeper hit, to "Lookin' 4 Rock," a boiling rave-up that resurrects Popof's rant style, *Armageddon* delivers steely resolve, a snapshot of an artist transcending doubts.

Armageddon carries the hallmarks of Popof's recent work — sonic precision and containment — but adds a spontaneity not heard in bulk since 2006's *End of Greatness*. Elliptical keyboard figures and drum patterns play skeleton to muscular vocals, infusing chaos with a reassuring sense of order. As with his previous albums, Popof is not casting about for quick bites. Rather he is fishing in his favorite spot, sipping a beverage, and waiting patiently for you to hit the hook.

And with songs like the '80s-inflected synth-funk jam "Uncanny Valley," the dulcimer-tone good-times anthem "Time & Space," and the loopy pop-grooving "Gadabout," co-written with Arms of Kismet/Waterslide frontman Mark Doyon, the hooks keep coming.

With *Armageddon*, Popof suggests we are all, when faced with the prospect of our inevitable demise, generating a unique soundtrack from within. We spend our lives trying to make that soundtrack audible to others.

Rest assured, we hear this one loud and clear.



UPC: 884501834636

SRP: \$12.12

Release date: 12/12/2012

Label: Wampus Multimedia

Mastered by Eamon Loftus



Track Listing:

1. Ataraxis (I Brake for Squirrels)*
 2. Uncanny Valley
 3. When You Reach Palodes
 4. Alectryon at the Door*
 5. Time & Space*
 6. Beginning of the End
 7. Black T
 8. Lookin' 4 Rock
 9. Camp Followers
 10. Gadabout*
 11. Black Tourmaline
 12. Tamp Down the Horizon
- *Suggested Listening

Available @ CD Baby and iTunes

Live:

Kowtow performs live with electric guitarist Rob Santos. Previous appearances include Northern Virginia venues Fireflies, Galaxy Hut, and Iota Club & Café, and Vermilion.

Format:

AAA, Alternative Rock, Modern Pop, Electronica

contact kevin kerr: kowtow@earthlink.net
kowtowpopof.com . wampus.com



TASTES LIKE ARMAGEDDON The title of Kowtow's new album is a mischievous mashup of the title of Star Trek episode "A Taste of Armageddon," in which planets wage war with computers, with the phrase "tastes like chicken," slang sometimes used to describe the taste of human flesh.

PRESS:

Exalted Headband (2009):

"... cool, intelligent, heady instrumentals with a difference ... great heady progressive stuff." - *LMNOP.com/babysue.com/dOWN7.com*

"... extremely intricate and nuanced in both composition and performance ... written with a cinematic scope in mind, using recurring thematic elements to construct an integrated series of compositions that work as a stand alone modern *Organica* symphony ..." - *Wildy's World*

"... intriguing and captivating and utterly unique ..." - *Jason Warburg, The Daily Vault*

End of Greatness (2006):

"... intoxicating enough in its strangeness that it should almost certainly come with a warning label of some kind. ... a fresh new universe of post-modernist art-pop." - *Jason Warburg, The Daily Vault*

"Though the title may portend doom, Popof shows no fear, flying through this full-length while displaying a confident and unabashed approach ... [End of Greatness] is an intelligent and delightful affair." - *Wes Barker, Amplifier Magazine*

"Popof effortlessly spins sugary webs of pop-rock wonder, Beatlesque in daring and whimsy, and Chilton-esque in power-chord skronk ... these bright and inspired gems, amazing in their simplicity and deep absorption of influences, do not confuse. They say their piece and move on, and you follow along for the ride." - *Mike Wood, Foxy Digitalis*

Kowtow Drops the Pop Off (2003):

"Kowtow Popof (cool name) writes great little pop songs and dresses them up in his very singular fashion: a little electronica, a little folk, a little just plain weirdness." - *Norman Famous, Normanfamous.com*

"Simple, clean songs that don't work too hard to bring out the emotional and occasionally transcendental nature of a gifted songwriter." - *Heidi Drockelman, Indie-Music.com*

Eat My Dust (1999):

"These clever, fast-talking tunes rock resolutely, but also clean up real nice. Vast, open-sky guitars render the ballads absolutely heart-breaking." - *Listen.com*

"This record reeled me in like a helpless fish ... This is one of few really good driving records that I've heard in a while." - *Heidi Drockelman, Indie-Music.com*

Coaster (1996):

"Coaster is full of lively acoustic/electric folk and rock ... The title track is an impeccable pop classic." - *Time and a Word Music News*

"Coaster lopes along a moody undercurrent of warmth and grace, carefully constructed to reap the maximum reward from minimal sonics." - *J. Doug Gill, Music Monthly*

Songs from the Pointless Forest (1993):

"Preternaturally surrealist post pop" - *Eve Zibart, the Washington Post*

"Makes a lyrical statement on alienation as bleak, powerful and dead-on as Pink Floyd ever did." - *Ian Koss, Ink Nineteen*



Musical description:

Electronic Rock; Metric meets the Moody Blues; Gary Numan as John Lennon on Harry Nilsson's *Pussy Cats*; Bowie and Beck on a bender.

"...K.P. is a skilled songwriter, arranger and producer. Neither a rock purist nor a electronica zealot, he crafts music that balances songcraft with samples and swooshes...Any guy who can invoke Dylan's 'Knockin' on Heaven's Door' while singing about 'Slim Jims & Tab' over a tick-tock electrobeat is not about to be typecast. - Mark Jenkins, *the Washington Post*, 2003

Discography:

Tastes Like Armageddon (2012)
Exalted Headband (2009)
End of Greatness (2006)
Hitchcock Blonde's Soul Button (2006)
Kowtow Drops the Pop Off EP (2003)
Eat My Dust (1999)
Coaster (1996)
Songs from the Pointless Forest (1993)
Splinters & Threads (1989)
Stringing Along the Dreamline (1987)



ATARAXIS (I BRAKE FOR SQUIRRELS)

BUZZ WORDS ON A BIT MAP
IN THE CROSSHAIRS OF A SAD SACK...
BLACK TIES OFF A THIRD RAIL
PAST THE CROSSROAD TO THE BELLERIN' PLAIN...

IF IT'S RIGHT, THEN IT MIGHT
BE THE WORDS IN A SONG;
IF IT'S WRONG, THEN FOR SURE
THAT'S WHEN YOU SING ALONG.

I BRAKE FOR SQUIRRELS
HEADIN' DOWN DEAD MAN'S CURVE:
A LONE ROUTE, LINED IN HEARTSEASE
'LONG THE FLAT EARTH AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD.

STORM DRAIN FULL OF SAND BAG
FROM THE STAR-CROSS OF THE HEAP SLAG...
BLACK SHEEP DRINK THE PIPE FLOOD
AT THE BLIND END OF THE TAPLINE ROAD...

IF IT'S RIGHT....

UNCANNY VALLEY

I AM A MEMORY
MIMED IN A MEMO
THAT YOU SCRAWLED INSIDE OUT.

I AM A MEMORY
TIMED IN A DEMO
THAT YOU PITCHED INSIDE OUT...

FANCED 'TIL TIME HAS FORSAKEN—
NOW JUST A BALL-JOINTED BUM
DEPUTIZED TO TURN OUT MISTAKEN;
A STILL LIFE FATED FOR NO ONE...

STOCKPILED TO STAY ON FORSAKEN,
FOUND IN GIN-JOINT OBLIVION.
ANALOGUE TASTES LIKE ARMAGEDDON—
A STILL LIFE FETED FOR NO ONE.

I AM A MEMORY
DEALT IN A DIARY
THAT YOU BURNED INSIDE OUT.

WHEN YOU REACH PALODES

DON'T MISTAKE THE VOICE,
WHEN YOU REACH PALODES.
WHOSE MURMURS MISS THE BOAT
LIKE WILLOWS WEEPING WHISPERED TEARS?

NATURE IN DISGUISE
WAITING FOR HER TIME TO FLOWER?
INVASIVE MEN OF LIES
STAGGERED AT HER FINEST HOUR?

NATURE'S GOT A WAY
OF TELLING YOU TO TAKE A HIKE.
PANIC HAS ITS DAY
WHILE AEONS FLOW IN HALCYON NIGHT.

DON'T MISTAKE THE VOICE,
WHOSE MURMURS MISS THE BOAT
AFLOAT ON WILLOWED SEAS
WHEN YOU REACH PALODES.

WHEN YOU REACH PALODES—
DON'T MISTAKE THE VOICE;
DON'T MISTAKE THE WHISPERED TEARS...

ALECTRYON AT THE DOOR

I HEARD THE VOICES
LIKE A DAWN CHORUS;
TWO SONGS ENTWINING
LIKE MORNING GLORY

AROUND THE LATTICE
OF ECHO'S HEADBOARD.
ALECTRYON SLEEPS
SICK AT THE STONE DOOR.

I AM THE SUN,
AND YOU ARE GOING DOWN.

I AM THE FLAT SUN
SLIPPING UNDER DREAM'S DOOR,
LETTING SLIP STORIES
OF UNTOLD GODS O' WAR.

CONQUERED TERRAINS CREEP
DOWN ACHERON'S SHORE;
THERE EVER I WEEP—
A FORFEIT TROUBADOUR.

I AM THE SUN...

TIME & SPACE

JUST YESTERDAY I LIFTED UP THE CURTAIN.
A FACE STARED BACK LOOKING PRETTY CERTAIN
THAT BLOOD WILL FLOW AND COMETS NEARLY MISS US.
AND JUST LIKE THAT HE WAS WALKING IN THE DISTANCE.

JUST TODAY MY LIFE SEEMS LIKE A CIRCLE:
A FACE STARING BACK, LOOKING LIKE MY DOUBLE,
AND THEN WE WALK IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS,
BOTH WONDERING WHEN WE'LL MEET ON THE HORIZON.

DRINK IN YOUR LIFE AND LET THE FEELING GO.
TURN ON THE LIGHT TO WHAT YOU WANT TO KNOW.
EMBRACE THE SPACE AND FEEL THE TIME SEEP IN.
DRINK DOWN THE WINE AND LET THE GOOD TIMES BEGIN.

MAYBE TOMORROW YOU'LL SEE ME ON THE CURB,
STARING AT NOTHING, TRYING TO GET SOME NERVE.
MAYBE ONE DAY YOU'LL SEE NOTHING MORE TO DO
THAN WALK A LONG FLAT MILE AS IF IN MY OWN SHOES.

DRINK IN YOUR LIFE AND LET THE FEELING GO...

BEGINNING OF THE END

DAYLIGHT IS OVERRATED.
ONE MIGHT THINK I'D ESCAPED IT

'TIL YOU UNCOVERED ME
FROM THE ROCKS AND DEBRIS,
HANGING JUST BY A THREAD,
THREAD-BARE AND LEFT FOR DEAD.
WHO WOULD BELIEVE
I WAS JUST HANGING,
FREE-FLOATING,
BARE FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE END?

SUN BURNS OVER THE RAINBOW.
WORLDS TURN OUT OF THEIR HALOES.

THE CHANCE THAT WE TAKE
WHILE OUR ORBITS DECAY
MIGHT SEEM DOOMED FROM THE START,
LIKE BLACK HOLES AT THE HEART.
YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE—
NOW I'M JUST HANGING FREE,
FLOATING
HERE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE END...

BLACK T

POCKY JOE STALIN,
AND CUT-OUT BIN LADEN,
AND BONNIE PRINCE CHARLIE—
ALL DIGGIN' MY BLACK T.

BARRY FITZGERALD,
AND HAROLD THE BARREL,
AND REMDAWG J. REMY—
ALL DIGGIN' MY BLACK T.

WILL.I.AM IDOL,
AND ROBERTO BERTOL,
AND PUNK CHUCK DUKOWSKI—
ALL DIGGIN' MY BLACK T.

LOOKIN' FOR ROCK

I BEEN LOOKIN' FOR THE SOUND OF VIOLENCE.
AN EAR TO THE GROUND FOUND GOLDEN SILENCE,
A DOWNLOAD OF ETHER FOR THE SÉANCE.
HOUDINI, WHY DO HE TRY MY PATIENCE?

I BEEN LOOKIN' FOR ROCK...
I BEEN LOOKIN' FOR LEWIS & CLARK,
BUT THE 'POD PEOPLE SAY I'M GOING TOO FAR.

I BEEN LOOKIN' FOR NEW SONGS OF INNOCENCE,
BUT A BUTT TO THE HEAD BODES BITTER SEQUENCE:
A MOUSE CLICKS ON CUBED ANTIDEPRESSANT;
BLUE MEANIES WILL SOON BE IN YOUR BASEMENT...

THEY'VE BEEN LOOKIN' FOR ROCK...
THEY'VE BEEN LOOKIN' FOR LEWIS & CLARK,
AND THE PRESIDENT SAYS THEY'RE WALKING LATE AFTER DARK.

I BEEN LOOKIN' FOR SOME LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.
MEDIOCRITY'S THE MESSAGE FROM MY INNER MCLUHAN:
UTOPIAN AD VENTURES IN OBLIVION.
COULD YOU PLEASE JUST SET ME FREE AND CALL IT EVEN?

I BEEN LOOKIN' FOR ROCK...
I BEEN LOOKIN' FOR LEWIS & CLARK,
BUT THE PRESIDENT SAYS I'M WALKING LATE AFTER DARK.

I'M WALKING LATE AFTER DARK...

CAMP FOLLOWERS

I RODE OVER THE UNDERWRITER,
HIS THICK RED PEN
STUCK IN MY RIGHT REAR TIRE.
I TOOK UP WITH A BLIND STREETWALKER,
GRUBSTAKED HER RENT
TO GLIMPSE HER BRAILLE LIPS FALTER.

THESE DAYS
ALL OF US ARE CAMP FOLLOWERS,
SCULLIONS OF THE HIGHEST ORDER.
DREAMS STAY
BURIED BENEATH THE SALT CEDAR.
CREPE-HANGERS AND NIGHT PORTERS—
WE ARE ALL CAMP FOLLOWERS.

I BOXED OUT THE STOCK INSTIGATOR,
HIS SPOOKY TOOTH
SLUNG FROM MY REARVIEW MIRROR.
I TOOK UP WITH A TRUE BELIEVER.
SHE LOVED ME NOT,
BUT SHE LET ME BEAT HER.

THESE DAYS...

GADABOUT

A BUTTERFLY OUT OF REACH OF DHARMA'S NET
LIT UPON ME LIKE A BURNED-OUT CIGARETTE.
AN EMISSARY OF CELESTIAL DREAMS DIVINE,
APHRODITE WITH AN ERRANT LENGTH OF TWINE.

AN ARROW STICKING IN THE PALM OF DHARMA'S HAND
CAST ASPERSIONS ON THIS CARNAL REPRIMAND.
SMOKY SIGNALING FROM KAMADEVVA'S LAIR,
A GIFT OF PLEASURE AND A WANTON CROSS TO BEAR.

GADABOUT, GADABOUT
GONNA HAVE TO DO WITHOUT.
GADABOUT, GADABOUT
DOWN AND OUT IN FULLER POUT.

DOWN AND OUT.

BLACK TOURMALINE

I WAS LONELY—
NOW I'M A LONER.
I WAS SOLD OUT—
NOW I'M A SOLDIER.
I WAS CUT OFF—
NOW I GET CLOSER.
I WAS BURNED DOWN—
NOW I CATCH FIRE.
MEMORIES LIKE DREAMS
LIVE LIFE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN
ETERNAL BACKGROUND
OF COSMIC BLEED,
SPLITTING ATOMS
ON NARROW BEAMS.

KICK BACK THE KARMA—
MY BLACK TOURMALINE...

TAMP DOWN THE HORIZON

PUR ON YOUR WASHED-GREY RAINCOAT,
GET TO THE LOCAL STORE
SET DOWN A SONG OF SADNESS
AT THE OLD RED HOUSE DOOR:

THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE CLOUDS
THAT DOESN'T SEEM QUITE RIGHT,
YOU'RE WONDERING ALOUD
UNDER MAROONING MORNING SKY.

PUSH ALONG THE SHOULDER
TIL STREETS TURN UP THE SUN;
PULL YOUR YELLOWED COLLAR CLOSER,
TAMP DOWN THE HORIZON.

A HANGING OF THE HEART,
BLOWN BY RESTLESS BREEZE;
AN EMPTY BOWL OF MADNESS,
TWISTING ROOTLESS TREES:

THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE CLOUDS
THAT DOESN'T SEEM QUITE RIGHT,
YOU'RE WONDERING ALOUD
AT EACH ABSINTHE STREAK OF LIGHT.

PUSH ALONG THE SHOULDER...

© 2012 TASTES LIKE ARMAGEDDON

ALL WORDS BY K. POPOF,
EXCEPT GADABOUT BY M. DOYON



KOWTOW POPOF
TASTES LIKE ARMAGEDDON
REVIEW BY: JASON WARBURG, DAILYVAULT.COM, JANUARY 8, 2013

I hear a lot about dream pop these days—but what about dream rock?

Kowtow Popof's songs—a swirling mix of electro-pop, roots-rock and magical thinking—are like impressionist daydreams, moments and feelings and images that provoke, set to an implacable groove. What makes Popof's work stand out to me, though, is that at its core it seems to be all about vibe. It's not "does B follow logically from A," it's "does XJ cubed sound kind of cool if you throw it into a song next to an orange elephant that speaks Ukrainian?"

Which might sound like an exaggeration by yours truly until you read the first song title on this album—"Ataraxis (I Brake For Squirrels)"—and come to understand that "I brake for squirrels" is in fact the song's refrain and does in fact fit quite naturally into the song's hallucinatory groove, which layers otherworldly synthesizer flourishes over rootsy chunka-chunka guitar, a steady, assertive rhythm section and Popof's rather scruffy, urgent vocals.

Again and again, Popof uses atmospheric synth effects to create a sort of dreamy distance while keeping the guitars and drums and vocals raw, melding electronic dreaminess with the immediacy and urgency of more naturalistic tones and instruments. This unusual combination of elements and a focus on creating strong, repeated rhythm patterns creates the sort of hypnotic effect heard clearly in the second half of "Uncanny Valley," with its endlessly cycling electric piano and guitar figures over a canyon-deep groove, sort of a Tom Waits-backed-by-Kraftwerk fantasia.

To the extent there's a narrative thread running through *Tastes Like Armageddon*, it seems to be of the "soundtrack to the Mayan apocalypse" variety. At least that's what I gleaned from the one-sheet and a few stray lines of "When You Reach Palodes," whose vaguely '80s synths paint an eerie, winding melody under and around Popof's increasingly intense vocals, the nimble, agitated rhythm section and distorted guitars.

"Alectryon At The Door" slows things down for a surrealistic ballad before leaping into the downright cheery sounds of "Time & Space," a tune that combines a steady-on rock beat, acoustic piano, electronic string section, Popof's most raw, upfront vocals yet, and yes, some wild little synth effects. There's a crossover vibe happening here that defies description, like early Springsteen in a mind-meld with A Flock Of Seagulls. The overall effect, though? Cinematic, that's the word.

Highlights the rest of the way would have to include the haunting little synth figure at the heart of "Beginning Of The End"; the playful dopiness and relentless beat of "Lookin' 4 Rock"; and "Gadabout," a collaboration with Waterslide/Arms of Kismet mastermind Mark Doyon that delivers a mix of Cars synth-rock and Van Morrison mysterious mysticism over yet another hypnotic groove. Closer "Tamp Down The Horizon" starts out like a Coldplay tune with big piano out front until the vocals come in, when things go a little off-kilter, as they always do in a KP song.

"Black Tourmaline" might sum things up best in the end, though: a steady soulful pulse from piano, bass and drums, with Popof's bluesy guitar and vocals—a bit Claptonesque here and there—out front at first... and then the alien electronic sounds start to infiltrate, the rhythm section develops a strange hitch, and you're left to wonder: just what the hell is a "tourmaline," anyway? (I'll save you the trip to Wikipedia: a semi-precious stone most commonly found in Sri Lanka.)

Tastes Like Armageddon is another entertaining effort from the vivid imagination of one of the more creative singer-songwriters out there (and I do mean out there). Dreamy to the point of bending reality, yet rocking in all the right places, this album is another head trip to the far side and back with the incomparable Kowtow Popof in the driver's seat. B+

ALBUM & AUDIENCE: Q&A WITH KOWTOW POPOF
By Wampus Multimedia, 25Jul2012



As a contemporary songwriter, are you focused on making albums? Or just singles? Or are you emphasizing your live show, where you can reach your audience more regularly, with greater immediacy? Is creating “proper” albums still a part of your artistic plan?

While the album has undergone dramatic change in recent years — the “devaluation” of content, the slicing and dicing of linear narrative — it remains the most eloquent way to capture and communicate an artist’s vision. At its best, it is a fixed, detailed representation of an original idea, a document.

Singer-songwriter **Kowtow Popof** spends a good bit of time thinking about albums, having recorded and released a passel of fine ones since emerging on the indie scene more than 20 years ago. His forthcoming entry, *Tastes Like Armageddon*, is slated for release on Wampus this winter.

We asked Kowtow about the state of the album in 2012 — for him and for the rest of us.

Wampus: The traditional album has been the main delivery vehicle for music for the last 50 years or so. Lately there has been a lot of talk about its future -- whether or not it can captivate an audience whose need for stimulus increases while its attention span wanes. Are you sticking with albums for your music or do you have other plans?

Kowtow: I’m naturally inclined toward making albums. The kind of music I listened to growing up-- *Sgt. Pepper’s*, Nilsson’s *The Point*, *Tea for the Tillerman* by Cat Stevens, to name a few—most likely got me to thinking that way. By the time I started actually creating music, I was already wired to make albums. I doubt for me there’s really any other choice.

I don’t think the album will become obsolete. In rock music, there always seems to be a singles-albums dichotomy going on. The audiences are different. Not that there’s much of an audience for me either way. The kinds of things I’ve thought about doing differently than what I’ve done before have to do with introducing another medium, like video, but still within an album framework. So I guess I’m putting all my eggs in one basket. Just hope they aren’t Great Auk eggs.

If you were going to incorporate video into an album, how might it work? Would the video complement the music, like a music video, or would the two work together more like a narrative film?

When I’m creating music, there’s something visual going on in my head. There’s a sense of a physical place to me. I don’t just mean the song is based on an experience, and I’m visualizing the experience. It’s almost like the song has its own physical reality. I’ve often thought it would be fun to try to tap into that, to try to approximate what I “see.” There’s a *Twilight Zone* episode where they try to show what the fourth dimension looks like. It’s a little like that. Except inside my head is probably a little more disturbing.

So I would lean toward doing something abstract, perhaps something found in the everyday, something more about texture, light, and movement and not particularly narrative in nature. This is probably a good thing, since I don’t have the skills to do something more sophisticated than that. If I were to collaborate with a film maker, then I’d want to explore how they visually interpret the music. If the idea of adding visuals is to promote the music, it is probably better to call in a professional. But still, it would have to be more something along the lines of the Brothers Quay rather than a Steel Panther video.

You’re wrapping your eighth studio album, *Tastes Like Armageddon*, for release later this year. How did your creative process differ on this record, and in what ways was it the similar?



Typically I write the majority of my songs on guitar. However, my last album, *Exalted Headband*, was an instrumental record where I experimented more with composing using music software. *TLA* is sort of a vocal version of *Headband*, but with more traditional pop song structures. A lot of the songs are written based on a riff rather than a chord progression.

This ended up being the way I conceived the album as a whole. For most of my records before *Headband*, I’d have a batch of songs written on guitar that made up the core of the album. So once I went about recording them, the basic gist of the record was already established. For *TLA*, I was composing the songs as I recorded them; the themes of the album were coming out of the recording process itself. There’s nothing particularly groundbreaking about this, but for me personally it’s

kind of liberating. I'm able to break away from convention a little more. It becomes more about discovery and less about procedure.

Do you see this as an evolution away from the "procedural" or as a swing of the pendulum you're riding at the moment? Some of your past records (like *Coaster* and *Splinters & Threads*) play more as classic narrative albums to my ears, while your recent work seems harder to pin down, more abstract. Do you think that's accurate?

I think that's pretty accurate. Part of it has to do with subject matter. *Coaster* and *Splinters & Threads* are more directly about relationships than my other work, and I think I took a more direct approach in conveying them. There was a beginning, middle and end to them similar to the relationships they're about. *TLA* is more like a set of unfocused snapshots of a possible future, garbled communications from a world on the brink. It's probably more like my first record.

There's also something to be said for changing up your approach, taking a different angle than before, so I think that's part of it too. Perhaps I've gotten more abstract because I perceive a lot more gray area than I used to. Or I may just be devolving into inarticulateness.

A big part of getting the work out there nowadays is connecting personally with the audience, rather than simply doing advertising, radio and so on. You've been featuring one of your songs every day on social media, along with a t-shirt from your vast (I'm told) collection. What gave you that idea?



In the past when I've released a record, I'd play a few gigs locally to promote it, and then I'd retreat to the studio to work on the next album, essentially dropping off of the face of the earth for a couple of years. Then I'd release the next one and start the process all over again. It's a rather quaint approach, as if the world wide web never happened. I was happy to make records, I just wasn't very comfortable trying to sell them (which is a pretty quaint idea these days in itself). But it made sense to at least call attention to the fact that I was making a record, and I wanted to do it in some semi-novel way that reflected my personality.

I do have a pretty immense collection of t-shirts. Even the people who know me well have not seen the majority of them. Once I came upon the title for the record, it seemed like doing some sort of countdown was in order--end of the world happening on a specific day and all. Aside from my record collection, I don't have a year's worth of anything to count down, other than my tees. So, out of that came Kowtow's T-shirt Countdown to Armageddon.

Being a daily occurrence, I felt like the countdown needed a little more context than simply saying in so many days I'm releasing a record. So I try to include trivia that relates to each shirt. It's been pretty enlightening, and I've found that I'm probably more consistently focused on the record than I might be otherwise. For certain milestones, there are trivia contests to give away my CDs, as well as a t-shirt I've had made for the occasion.

I think my t-shirt collection says a lot about me, although mostly it probably says I'm a goof. But Kowtow's Recipe Countdown to Armageddon just didn't have the same ring to it.

It's a novel idea, a great way to frame your conversation with people. They see that other side of you. Are you entertaining ideas yet for future Kowtow albums? How would you like for your relationship with your audience to unfold over the long run?

The next record will likely be a reaction to this one. *TLA* is willfully electronic, and it's about the world going to hell in a hand basket. For the follow-up I want to do something stripped down and acoustic, with perhaps piano as a featured instrument. I've been listening to a lot of Scandinavian jazz lately. And thematically it would also be an opposite, more about endlessness than the end of things (the working title is *Infinite Suns*). Obviously I don't really believe the world ends when *TLA* comes out.

I think I am always entertaining album ideas. There might be a special cog for that in my brain that is always spinning. I've been making records as Kowtow for 25 years in relative obscurity, and I feel like I have a pretty decent collection of songs. I'd like to revisit some of them and put together an album of new versions. If I have an audience, it might be interesting for them to see my catalog from that perspective. Of course, I can't help but be little perplexing about anything I do, so the album might be surf renditions. My brother came up with the title – *Kowtowabunga!*

One last question... Given what you've learned from dreaming up and creating albums, what advice would you give to an artist just getting started? What would you suggest they do -- and avoid?

Don't trust anyone giving tips on songwriting.