

Liner Notes: Xavier Rudd on 'Dark Shades of Blue'



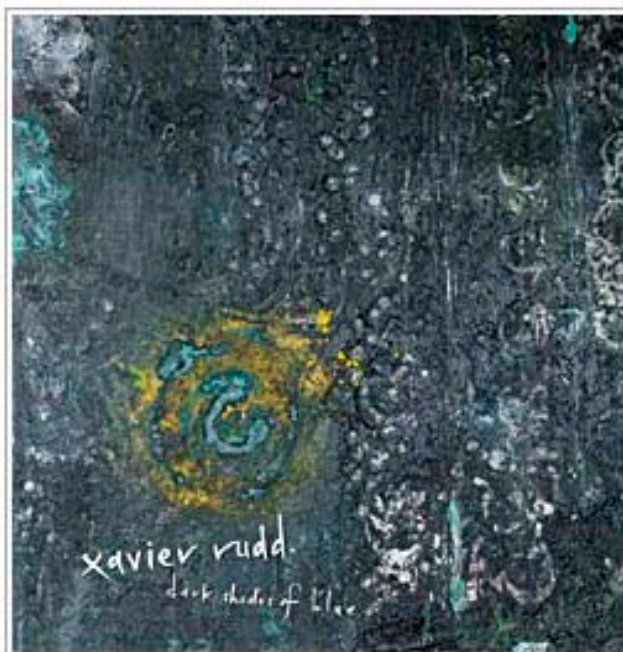
THE MUSIC OF Australian singer/songwriter **Xavier Rudd** has always been a battle between light and dark.

Just listen to "G.B.A." from 2004's "**Solace**." **Rudd** sings over a slightly distorted lap-slide guitar and a barrage of didgeridoo: "I know, I see, I feel and yes, I fear it everyday / These egos, their minds and games / With all their power could end our days / Still the sun it shines and the moon it sinks with grace."

While **Rudd**'s message is generally one of peace, there's always been a deep-seeded anger in his words, his fears for what the Earth he loves so much could become.

And the new "**Dark Shades of Blue**" (Anti-) is Rudd's most harrowing album yet, with crunchier guitars and a much fuller sound.

"This time we were able to achieve a darker tone which I've been trying to do for a long time," Rudd said. "I'm really happy with the sound on this album; I think we captured the thickness. The music comes from the last couple of years of traveling, which has been amazing: a lot of high highs and low lows. So, I think there's all sorts of emotion on this album, high and low."



For many years, Rudd championed a one-man-band approach playing live; then **Dave Tolley** joined Rudd on tour as a part-time drummer, though he only sits in to add percussion when needed.

For concerts, the 30-year-old Rudd sits in the middle of the stage flanked by an army of different guitars (Weissenborn slide guitars, resonator slide guitars, acoustic guitars, slide banjo, basses, electric guitar and more), percussion instruments (including a stomp box at his feet) and a barrage of didgeridoos to his front.

Actually, Rudd prefers to call the didgeridoo by its Aboriginal name, *yidaki*. The instrument produces deep, almost moaning tones that, when done correctly, can be manipulated to yelp and produce other strange sounds.

Rudd, already a household name in his native land, guided us through his "**Dark Shades of Blue**" album track by track. [You can preview parts of each track on [Amazon](#).]

» "**Black Water**" and "**Dark Shades of Blue**"

"Black Water" is [the name of] a painting of my wife's [Marci Lutken-Rudd], and that's the [CD] cover, and all of her paintings are featured throughout the album art. For me, "Black Water" [the song] relates to "Dark Shades of Blue," which is the second song, and the painting, and it's about reflecting on our time apart; it's a reflection of our whole journey [as husband and wife]. I just love staring into her artwork and reflecting because my art is so exposed and so public.

» **"Secrets"**

I've been traveling around pretty solidly for almost the last 10 years and by the nature of what I do I've met a lot of environmental groups and people wanting change for the future. ... And "Secrets" is kind of about that.

» **"Guku"**

"Guku" is my Aboriginal brother and he passed away last year. Banula Marika of the Rirratjingu clan of NE Arnhem Land, who sings on it, is his blood brother. Recording that was probably one of the most emotional experiences I've ever had in my life. Banula came down and he had tears in his eyes, and the "Guku" traditional song in the middle of the song ... has been sung for forever. ... Just one of those experiences where you have tears in your eyes at the end.

» **"Edge of the Moon"**

It's a celebration of music and staying connected through music and good energy through thousands of years and good cultures together. In a time like the modern world right now, celebration and festivals — it's very important. "Edge of the Moon" is about that energy: If you want to take drugs or whatever and to go to that high place — it's celebrating the energy. When I was writing it and reflecting on my shows, I thought of someone on [psychedelic mushrooms] enjoying the music. People on 'shrooms are pretty noticeable for me, and I enjoy it — especially in the States. I like watching them dance and, well, trip.



» **"This World as We Know It"**

It's more of a frustration angle like, "OK, when are these governments going to place emphasis on this Earth?" I mean, fuck, every country you go there's so much frustration with government. At what point in our world's future can we think of this Earth as one?

» **"Shiver"**

"Shiver is just kind of some personal business. It relates back to my family and stuff I don't want to get into too much. I've crossed some bridges with them in them in the past year and this song is about that.

» **"Uncle"**

Uncle is Goomblar Wala, an Aboriginal medicine man [who has toured with Rudd in the past], and it's a dedication to him. He got locked up when he was 16; he was on the streets for years and was on all sorts of drugs and stuff, but he's been clean from seven or eight years. He's also got this culture that comes from being a medicine man and "Uncle" kind of tracks this journey which is kind of a tornado.

» **"Up In Flames"**

[*Rudd beings speaking the lyrics to the track*] Again, this world up in flames, reasons unexplained, people grounded down, trying to escape. When will you release them from this? When will you realize the shame? Look at the fire burning. All that you see is pain. Up in flames.

» **"Hope That You'll Stay"**

"Hope That You'll Stay" comes from an old man that passed away and reflecting on his family — it just came out of me that way. It has my new instrument, chaturangui, a 20-string slide guitar. It's trippy, it's interesting I haven't been playing it a while. ... It's got an Indian feel.

» **"Home"**

Well, we did so much touring and "Home" is going home after so much journeying in the last few years. And when we got to recording this album we just got home from a really intense tour in winter in North America and it was really cold and I got sick, so I was really happy to be home. It felt like the right song to end the album with based on the last couple of years.

» **9:30 Club**, 815 V St. NW; Sun., Sept. 14, 7 p.m., \$20; 202-265-0930. (U St.-Cardozo)

Written by Express contributor Rudi Greenberg