

**Radio/Press Interview with
The Planetary Group,
Boston, MA June 2007**

Planetary: Ok, let's start from the beginning. What is your name and what do you play?

Adam Zwig: Adam Zwig, play guitar and sing, also bass and keys on some recordings

PL: What's your age?

AZ: Not as old as the music industry's obsession with youth but as old as people's yearning for liberation

PL: How many years have you been playing music?

AZ: Started playing guitar at 10 and never stopped

PL: How many different (and which) instruments do you play?

AZ: Play guitar - acoustic, electric, slide, dobro and also some bass, keys, drums

PL: Are there any genres that influence your music conceptually, rather than sonically, meaning that you can't hear from simply listening to your music, but from getting into the structure or mathematics of the song-writing?

AZ: I guess I've always been drawn to more old-time music, dusty music of the earth, like blues, and folk sea shanties, civil war songs, cowboy songs, songs of lament, church house songs, anti-Jim Crow songs, union songs and blues ballads, and driving hard blues - make you question what you've always accepted, had power of spirit behind them, could litter the landscape with broken hearts but also transport you to a liberated consciousness. Blues and folk can show you how to live. I started as a bluesman and always return to this emotional and spiritual source. Folk adds a more social consciousness but they

both come from this deep archaic need to acknowledge those feelings and yearnings we tend to overlook.

PL: Could you name some of your influences.

AZ: Sure, Woody Guthrie, Dave Van Ronk, Joan Baez, Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, all the early blues masters, and Peggy Seeger, Ed McCurdy, Josh White, The New Lost City Ramblers, Gus Cannon, Clarence Ashley, Tom Paley, I guess early American folk and blues you could say.

PL: How did you get into music?

AZ: As a kid wherever I'd hear music, I'd go into a trance, feel this rapture, feel transported to another world, didn't matter what kind of music, I didn't differentiate or evaluate, was just a profound feeling I got. I'd hide under the blankets with a transistor radio and feel like I was in on some universal secret. Then at 10, I replaced piano lessons with guitar lessons and never turned back. As a teenager I had the same compelling experiences with lyrics, especially from old English, Scottish, Irish ballads, made me feel like I was living in another place and time and I still feel like this, except that that world and time is here and now.

PL: Name at least three bands that are still around and touring that you'd love to be on a bill with, and think it fits well.

AZ: Wilco, Damian Rice, Neko Case, Brandi Carlile, Neil Young,

PL: What bands have you toured with that you feel have a heavy influence on your music?

AZ: Actually, I've toured with many bands and artists but don't feel they have influenced my current music; I guess you could say many of the artists that have influenced my current music are looking at us with eyes of the dead.

PL: Is there anything that you do outside of playing music that influences your music like lifestyle choices or hobbies or something?

AZ: Ok here comes the strange part of the story: am also a psychotherapist, a sort of Buddhist rock n roll psychologist if you will, feel there are actual tools you can use to liberate yourself permanently just like music can liberate you temporarily. Resolve your personal issues to actualize the great underlying yearning we all have to connect with something beyond ourselves, that universal awareness and freedom you get when you die or fall in love or feel free in life or feel part of contributing something to the world or feel a connection to the Gods or feel something is gonna carry you through your hard times. So I work with people, give workshops and am writing a book on personal development; music gives you the experience, and psychology and spiritual practice give you the concrete tools to integrate this experience, become the music, I guess you could say.

PL: What were you going through during the songwriting process for "Cast Iron Letters"?

AZ: I had been touring for years with Shapeshifter and felt I was slowly getting swallowed up by the entertainer syndrome, singing the same old songs where people were digging me more than I was digging myself, just going through the motions, started to feel like a hypocrite, saying music is a spiritual undertaking but just partying without much mindfulness or purpose. Something in me cracked, I was fed up, I'd had enough, felt like an actor in a play that had no end and I wanted out, so I decided to withdraw from the band and the world. I had to return to what had first awakened me to music, find the inspiration behind the inspiration, remember why I was doing this. I began a serious meditation practice to reconnect with

myself and deepen my own awareness. It was during this retreat from the world that I wrote Cast Iron Letters. Didn't have any plans to write songs, in fact, felt fed up and finished with the whole scene, didn't want to write or play any more and didn't see myself returning. But this stuff just came out of nowhere, literally, would get up from my meditation and go over to the 8-track and start talking lyrics and playing guitar, kind of thought was just a momentary release and would return to meditation. When this became a daily occurrence, I gave in and said ok I'll make a little CD for my friends, and then I said, fine, send it out and maybe someone else can feel my thoughts.

PL: When did you record?

AZ: Summer 2006

PL: Where did you record?

AZ: In my apartment

PL Did you have a heavy hand in the production?

AZ: Yes, I co-produced with Jonathan Plum after I laid down the basic tracks alone. He produced and engineered for Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains, Candlebox, Melissa Etheridge, and some others. He's a really cool cat, very laid back and creative.

PL: How do you feel about fitting in to certain genres, as opposed to being part of an eclectic, can't-put-your-finger-on-it mix?

AZ: Maybe there should be 2 genres, music we like and music we don't like; silly joke but the categories reminds me of what they call typology in psychology where they try to fit people into certain psychological types instead of seeing the whole unique person, or in this case, the unique expression of the artist. I guess the genres thing has to do with business and selling and not the music itself, it's convenient, although not necessarily

natural to the art.

PL: You've recorded in many different genres -- blues, folk, rock, hip-hop. How is it to have gone through such a diverse musical life, genre-wise?

AZ: Well, to me it all has the same source, same feeling, same Gods, I don't know, you know, the celestial earth voices of truth and sound, or something like that.

PL: How do you see your music in relation to current rock music?

AZ: For me, a lot of rock music just isn't enough, maybe gives you a catchy phrase and a driving rhythm but isn't serious and doesn't reflect life in a realistic way. I knew when I got into blues and folk as a basis for rock it was more of a serious type thing. The songs are filled with more depth, despair, sadness, triumph, more faith in the supernatural, the spirits and Gods, songs like Go Down Ye Bloody Red Roses or See That My Grave Is Kept Clean or Crossroad Blues, songs like that. I needed this. Life is full of complexities and rock n roll often doesn't reflect that. I suppose you could say rock music is a needed escape from life's burdens, but I feel the surest and quickest way through the other side of those burdens is by looking at them and processing them. I mean love and sex and "I'm so hot for you" are great but there are other important things too and people shouldn't turn their backs on them just because they ain't pretty to look at. I was glad to see how many artists did express themselves about the war though. So I guess music for me is not just to entertain people, it's to challenge and maybe inspire people to develop a beginners' mind and a beginner's feelings, to open up to new possibilities in yourself and in others, dream dreams beyond our everyday selves, dream closer to our universal self in what we feel and think and dream of contributing to the world, making it a better place. Obviously, I'm not trying to be cutting edge, see myself more

in a long line of a tradition of blues and folk, with my own kind of psychological and spiritual twist. For me, folk songs and blues are ways to explore the universe in picture and feeling, a guide into an alternate reality, a liberated awareness of life, another republic, an invisible republic, just like psychology and spirituality are ways to explore the universe through our personal issues and experiences. So I'm not interested in putting myself across in my music, what I'm interested in is putting the songs and their messages across, like in therapy, I try to get out of the way and facilitate the person's own wisdom.

PL: So you feel older music is still important.

AZ: Absolutely, and I'm fascinated by how music survives and translates through generations and centuries actually. You could take a modern rock song and trace it back to influences in English folk music of the 16th century. You know, in America, we tend to think something supposedly new just popped out of nowhere, not much of a sense of history, but in fact, there is a long and rich musical history we're dealing with.

PL: How do you write songs?

AZ: A song is like a dream and you want it to come true, to actualize, to materialize. There's a dreaming story and are you awake enough to catch it or maybe you need the sleep and wait for another one. They just come to you. Everybody's dreaming and so everybody's got songs. Some people just take them more seriously than others. Native American lore says dreams are the gods talking to us in visions and feelings, so I guess that applies to songs also.

PL: What is the single, "Castaways" about?

AZ: My songs are just feelings I get, dreamings, strange stares of mind, so I

don't analyze them, other people can do that if they need to. Castaways, I suppose it's a song of freedom, we're all driving together to the sea and leaving behind our troubles, kind of a dream for the world I guess. I like that old Ojibway saying: "Sometimes I go about pitying myself while all the while great winds are carrying me across the sky."

PL: How about "Who Killed Michael Vaughn?"

AZ: Well, I think the words on that 1 are self-explanatory. Who takes responsibility for the dead and wounded in this war, the army, the enemy, the parents, the government, the media, who?

PL: "It's All gonna Fall"

AZ: The many sufferings and hypocrysies of the world are gonna come crashing down, an optimistic song I'd say.

PL: "Freedom Flashing"

AZ: Freedom in the wind, in the universe, like that Ojibway saying.

PL: I heard you're writing a book. Does this relate to your music?

AZ: What makes the blues and folk so powerful is that you look directly into the face of your troubles, you go into them instead of running from them, and by doing this intentionally you acquire an outside awareness, something transcendent, you actually get outside of your problems and get beyond them into something you'd have to call spiritual or ecstatic or relieving or something. Well, then you need some tools to integrate these experiences or they are fleeting. When the music stops, the concert is over, the meditation experiences ceases, the psychotherapy wears off, you go back to who you were with the same damn problems. So you need some tools to discover the meaning and spirit behind your problems, what they are teaching you

and how you can integrate these teachings. You see, your problems are actually the doorway to your enlightenment, success, fulfillment, but you gotta have a set of tools for first uncovering the implicit directions trying to manifest in your life that these problems are pushing you toward, and then you need a disciplined strategy to integrate these directions. So blues and folk say yes to what's happening and feel into it as deeply as possible and find our way through to it's deeper message; then these psychological and spiritual tools say let's take this further and actually become and live our deeper selves in the world, become the music, so to speak. You see, music can give you a temporary liberation, a transcendent dreaming experience beyond yourself, something universal. Psychology and meditation can also do this but these experiences all tend to be fleeting. I wanted to know how could we integrate and become these experiences, become the music, that universal flow you sometimes experience. So I studied why we don't integrate these deep experiences and am writing a book. Since this is a music interview, I'll try not to get too far afield, ok: first, we need tools to process our core issues, those problems that never seem to go away, so you can open up to the implicit directions trying to manifest in your life. Then we need what I call "forward visioning"™, a disciplined strategy for integrating what you have learned in this self-processing. Without "forward visioning" you get psychology and meditation and music lovers where you constantly hear of these amazing experiences, healings, and insights and music but you don't actually see people living these experiences, walkin' the talkin', if you know what I mean.

PL: Could you give an example of how blues and folk and psychology and spirituality lead to deeper connection to yourself.

AZ: Sure, uhh, let's take a common

problem like depression. Seems like everyone these days is taking some kind of medication for this or just struggles with it sometimes. Did you know there are 2 kinds of depression? An aggressive depression feels like something is pushing you down, oppressing you from above. And a spiritual or existential depression feels like something is pulling you down from below. An aggressive depression you gotta fight back and identify and take the inner oppressor's power and energy. You know there are lots of different kinds of inner oppressors, they're usually voices or thoughts or feelings telling you that you suck in some way. With an existential depression you gotta let go and dream and die and find your deeper feeling and meaning in life. You're 2 attached to your everyday goings on, everyday reality, and need to drop out of this temporarily to connect with a deeper underlying meaning behind your life. Kind of like a Native American vision quest. And you find out which of these you have by sensing yourself and asking yourself the question: how would you make someone depressed if you wanted to, and act this out, like an actor in a play. Do you oppress them with criticism or do you pull them down with spacey existential feelings and questions like, "why am I alive, what's the use?". Blues and folk go into these questions and say yes to creating and amplifying and exploring the feelings, and through this you discover what is wanted from you. It's a different kind of questioning: not "what do I want from life?" but "what does life want from me?" To be a stronger person perhaps, or to be more in contact with your purpose in life. The depression is meaningful if you de-construct it. But of course then you need a strategy for integrating the meanings you find. Otherwise, the depression just returns, for some people chronically, including if they're in therapy for years. Anyway, this is kind of over-simplified.

PL: You said folk and blues addresses

those feelings and yearnings we tend to overlook. What are these?

AZ: Oh god, everything, you know, what we really feel, our personal needs for acceptance, recognition, love and to love personally and spiritually and our more universal needs for a feeling of meaningfulness and connection with the whole of life and death. You know, "Why am I here, what am I meant to do here, why do people suffer, what happens when I die"? That kind of simple, everyday stuff.

PL: With your deep interest in psychology and spirituality, what motivates you to also play music?

AZ: It's a feeling that just happens. What makes the feeling, I don't know, that must be the man behind the curtain, I don't know, maybe it's Woody Guthrie.