

Robert Sarazin Blake – Bio

Robert Sarazin Blake was born circa 1977 in Bellingham, Washington and raised there. Recalling his introduction to music, Blake told me *“As soon as I could stand I was singing with my father. The first two songs we sang together were Shel Silverstein’s “Sing For The Song” which Tom Paxton covered early on, and “Ol’ Pen” written by Bill Staines. By the time I was five years old I was singing these songs with my Dad at parties. He plays a variety of American and Irish folk music, mixed with his own original songs. He’s a community musician playing city festival’s, nursing homes, schools, libraries and my musical education definitely started with him. At the age of fourteen, I got a guitar from my best friend who was three years older. He taught me to play the instrument and gave me an appreciation for a wide variety of music. I’ve been writing songs ever since.”* Robert Blake performed at Seattle’s Folklife Festival at the tender age of fifteen. Although Blake is considered a folk musician, like Jack Hardy, some of his creations embrace elements of traditional Celtic songwriting, while he’s not averse to performing country or blues based tunes. Blake’s debut, **“Another Irrelevant Year”** was a thirteen song, cassette only release.

These days, Blake retains an operating base in the west – Bellingham, Washington State – and one in the east – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - and since 1997 he has undertaken numerous national tours of the States. The same year, Blake launched his label Same Room Records, the ethos being that the sounds heard on the recording were all made simultaneously with the players occupying the same room. Simple. Blake has also performed in Europe and for several years has annually toured Ireland. The Basement Swing was a sextet composed of Robert Blake [guitar, banjo], Noah Patterson [drums], Sari Breznau [vocals, trumpet], Ryan Tattersall [upright bass], Ivan Molton [baritone and alto saxophone] and Al Bentley [tenor saxophone] and **“Myrtle Street,”** a mix of covers and Blake and Molton originals, was recorded live on April 19th 1999 at Seventh Heaven Studios in Bellingham, Washington. Blake’s sophomore solo recording **“Humdinger Days & Humdinger Nights”** was recorded in early February 2000 and released a few months later, while **“A Crowd Of Drunken Lovers”** surfaced towards the close of the following year.

By way of a memorial to an old time/bluegrass string band that he performed with for a couple of years, the nine song, Same Room Records release **“The High, Wide & Handsome Band”** featured Blake accompanied by Mark Huber [harmonica], Jeff Gray [upright bass], Jan Peters [fiddle/mandolin] and Dan Lowinger [electric guitar] and was recorded on May 13th 2000. The band’s name is based on a liquor related statement made, on one occasion, by Appalachian fiddler Gid Tanner. With the addition of a drummer, the band continues to perform in the North West at *“weddings, private parties, and beer joints.”* Bellingham plays host each Fall to the Annual Subdued Stringband Jamboree a two-day festival that Blake has organized since 2001. Blake appears on one track on the compilation **“The 4th Annual Subdued Stringband Jamboree - The Last September Show,”** while **“The First Friday Show”** is a CD-R live recording made during the during the 2005 Jamboree, that features nine songs by Blake and ten from The Crying Shame.

Tin Pan Caravan is a loose aggregation of musicians that performs together from time to time, but has yet to release a recording. In addition to Blake, the quartet is composed 2003 Kerrville Folk Festival New Folk Songwriting Competition winner Anais Mitchell [Middlebury, Vermont], Rachel Ries [Chicago, Illinois] and Louis Ledford [New Orleans, Louisiana]. Art of the Underground is a Buffalo, New York based label that releases hip-hop, hardcore, and Robert Blake recordings. His first outing for the imprint was titled **“Bellingham & Philadelphia”** and featured six songs [each] by Blake and Pennsylvania based song scribe Erik Peterson. In the new millennium Blake lived for a time in Philadelphia. Blake’s first full album for the Buffalo based imprint was **“Still Kissing Last Night’s Smoke Stained Lips,”** a collection of love songs, and was followed in early 2007 by ‘night’ vs. ‘day’ collection **“The Beautiful & The Afternoon.”**

Blake has shared stages with Mary Lou Lord, Danny Barnes, Erin McKeown, The Posies, Dave Mathews, Laura Viers, Peter Mulvey, Devon Sproule, Chris Chandler, Anne Feeney, Andrew Calhoun and others.

Discography :

with The Basement Swing – **“Myrtle Street”** [1999] :

with The High Wide & Handsome Band - **“The High, Wide & Handsome Band”** [2000] :

Robert Blake/The Crying Shame – **“The First Friday Show”** CD-R release only [2005] ;
Solo – **“Another Irrelevant Year”** [1996] ; **“Humdinger Days & Humdinger Nights”** [2000] ; **“A
Crowd Of Drunken Lovers”** [2001] ; **“Bellingham & Philadelphia”** also features six Erik Peterson
songs [2002] ; **“Still Kissing Last Night’s Smoke Stained Lips”** [2004] ; **“The Beautiful & The
Afternoon”** [2007] :

Arthur Wood

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[725 words]