

## Canadian singer/songwriters shine on CDs

### Alexandria Stuart

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#### Matthew Barber - Sweet Nothing

Sweet Nothing, Matthew Barber's second full-length album, is bathed in the shine of the Canadian singer songwriter brand of rock 'n roll where the chord progressions practically write themselves: it's comfortable like a flannel shirt; a predictable sound that's all over Canadian rock like toast crumbs on Sam Roberts' beard.

The Hot AC radio crowd (a staple for singer songwriters) quickly picked up on the first single Soft One as did Much Music and its older sister MuchMoreMusic.

Barber includes several ballads as welcome respite from the 4/4 timing guitar/drum arrangements. Love/Death is a lazy slide-guitar infused love note to a new flame while Morning Light, a love-gone-wrong song, harkens back to the sounds of the 70's classics and writers like James Taylor.

Water From A Tap is a quietly haunting, introspective road-trip song: "Well I've got some songs about love, sweet love in the tapedeck, guess I better turn them up... And I'm miles away from where I'm from." This is where Barber's gift as a songwriter really shines through; you can practically see him huddled in a basement corner with a guitar, ink-stained hand buried in a wire bound notebook.

Barber wears his musical influences (like Neil Young) on his sleeve. Sweet Nothing is a safe bet for the stocking of the Sam Roberts or Jack Johnson fan on your shopping list.

#### Mike Ford - Canada Needs You Volume One

Mike Ford is one of Canada's more prolific artists: member of Canadian sweetheart act Moxy Fruvous, solo artist, sideman and studio musician, theatrical composer, and now, educator. Ford has put together an album based on his efforts to bring Canadian history into classrooms in a new way. Yes folks, you heard me right; what we have here is narrative historical fiction, set to song, about the people and happenings in Canadian history.

Canada Needs You Volume One explores Canada's history (pre-1905) through everything from shanties and work songs to spirituals and rap. Ford set out to engage high school students with our country's history by using music to bring the people, places and events to life.

I'm Gonna Roam is a bluesy rap song that Ford often uses to open his classroom shows, to set the stage with a story about the wide spaces that make up the Canadian map.

Sir John A (You're OK) is a hard rocking track detailing the events of Sir John

A MacDonald's work in Canada.

As everyday listening this album takes a little getting used to but musically the songs stand up strong in their own right.

Ford sums up his motivation in the liner notes: "If any of these songs inspire the listener to look further into the lives and times being sung about, all I can say is WooHooooo!" And with the recent press on Canada's failure to educate kids about its own history it's about time someone started thinking (and acting) outside the box.

Educational value aside, this album makes cool listening for adults too. Check out [www.mikeford.ca](http://www.mikeford.ca) for more details on the songs. Canada Needs You Volume Two will look at Twentieth Century Canadian history.

With over a decade in the trenches of the music industry, we're reasonably sure Alexandria knows what she's talking about. Got a music thing? Got an opinion? Drop a line to [akstuart@shaw.ca](mailto:akstuart@shaw.ca).

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