



Bio information: **BLUE CRANES**
Title: **SWIM** (Cuneiform Rune 364) Format: CD / LP / DIGITAL

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**Portland, Oregon's Blue Cranes to Release *SWIM*,
A New Album Exploring Life's Tragic and Uplifting Extremes,
Produced by Nate Query of The Decemberists**

Since their formation in 2007, **Blue Cranes** have become a key player in the Portland, Oregon creative music/DIY scene and one of the most exciting groups to keep tabs on in the Northwest. They've developed a singular musical voice grounded in melody and explosive improvisations—marking off their unique microcosmic territory in “post-jazz” circles.

The members of the quintet—**Reed Wallsmith** on alto saxophone, **Joe Cunningham** on tenor saxophone, **Rebecca Sanborn** on keyboards, **Keith Brush** on bass, and **Ji Tanzer** on drums—bring a unique array of experiences to their group-centered aesthetic, including work with **AU**, **The Decemberists**, **Laura Veirs**, **Wayne Horvitz**, **Rebecca Gates**, **Laura Gibson**, **Ethan Rose**, **Pete Krebs**, **Black Prairie** and **Portland Cello Project**. The band takes an evolutionary step forward on their fourth full-length album, *Swim*, to be released June 4th on the Washington, D.C.-based **Cuneiform Records**.

Swim is a departure from Blue Cranes' previous, and in some ways simpler, albums. Steered dutifully by producer **Nate Query** of **The Decemberists**, it is a window into the sometimes messy emotional space of a group struggling with and celebrating the ephemeralness of life. This work is the culmination of several between-album projects, including a 30-day crowd-sourced Amtrak train tour in 2011, and a seven day group composition retreat, supported in part by a grant from Portland's Regional Arts and Culture Council. However, the heart of *Swim* lies in indelibly profound life events—the passing away of two dear friends, a serious injury, two weddings, and the birth of a child (Wallsmith's first)—events at tragic and uplifting extremes, both cathartic and celebratory.

“It's a lot denser than our other records,” says Cunningham. “It's got this heaviness to it, and a lot of dissonance. I think we were all sort of okay with that because of how we were feeling. It's dark, but it's not all dark.” “It's an imprint of that time,” adds Sanborn. “Just as our new works in progress are marked by who we are now.”

The musical response to all the heaviness happening to the band behind the scenes is spellbindingly good. The droning “Cass Corridor” sounds like an ominous alarm clock, pulsing and bursting with strings, space-y organs and nightmarish crescendos of brass. Guests **Steve Berlin** (Los Lobos), **Noah Bernstein** (**tUnE-yArDs**), and many more were tasked with recording a single unison note, which is mashed together in a cacophonous climax near the end of the song. “Polarnatt,” which was birthed in a group-writing session, sounds unhinged, like the soundtrack to an exploratory documentary. “Everything Is Going To Be Okay” is presented in memory of Wallsmith's sister-in-law, ethnomusicologist Franya Berkman. Written after she was diagnosed with late stage breast cancer, it moves through sadness, confusion, and anger to a celebration of life and all of its hopefulness, uncertainty and beauty.

More than half of the album incorporates arrangements for a string trio that includes **Patti King** (**Radiation City**) and **Anna Fritz** (Portland Cello Project)—cementing the group's love affair with that lush sonic palette. The tempestuous “Great Dane Small Horse” features the lucid voice of master improviser and violist **Eyvind Kang** (**Bill Frisell**, **Laura Veirs**). Album finale “Goldfinches”—recorded in a basement in Davis, California while the band was on tour—features **The Devil Makes Three's Cooper McBean** on musical saw.

If the musical cameos on *Swim* alone aren't an indication of the band's communal artistry, their internal relationships with each other as players is more than enough. “We listen to each other very deeply,” says Wallsmith.

“We'll show up with a song, and no one is scared to say anything about it,” continues Cunningham. “We just dig into it, pull it apart and nobody's going to get their feelings hurt. It's definitely a loving relationship.”

For more information on *Blue Cranes*, see:
www.bluecranesmusic.com - www.facebook.com/bluecranes - www.cuneiformrecords.com

PRESS & RADIO QUOTES

"A truly unconventional approach to improvised music." - WNYC

*"Rocks harder than most rock albums and says more than most singer-songwriters—without any words at all."
- Willamette Week*

"Wily, lyrical, evocative and bright." - Santa Barbara Independent

"One of Portland's brightest lights." - Downbeat

"Hooky melodies and strong backbeats." - Chicago Reader

"Joyous interplay." - UTNE Reader

"Rich melodies and dynamic interplay." - Los Angeles Times

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

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