



ALDORA BRITAIN RECORDS

The Global Independent & Underground Music E-Zine
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“Tomorrow’s Music Today”

ABR’S TOP PICKS...

Steve Baskin and the Fourteens,
Structure Sounds, and The
Vignatis!

Live Spotlight: ALKALINE TRIO with
Lowlives at Rock City, Nottingham,
England!

Also... The Top 10 Most Influential Records
of 1994 as voted for by our featured artists!

(Pictured artist: Steve Baskin and the
Fourteens)

Cruisin' for a Bluesin'

There is a goodtime joy to be found in old-time forms of music, whether that be hip-shaking rockabilly, gypsy jazz, instrumental swing, or a combination of all of the above, as is the case with **The Vignatis**. A shimmering duo out of sun-soaked Los Angeles, Fabrice and Tracy perform with an infectious musical camaraderie and connection, providing moments of sonic bliss and euphoria. These feelings and more have been captured on their recent *Gypsybilly* series, as well as back-catalogue releases such as 2009's formative *Birth of the Gypsybilly*. These recordings are full of intent, powerhouse performances, and timeless ear-candy. And taking a break from these musings, Fabrice and Tracy chatted to *Aldora Britain Records* about their Vignatis journey to date. We discussed the long-lasting impact of the COVID era, early musical memories from their youth, the beginnings and early days of The Vignatis, and much, much more. That exclusive in-depth conversation is published here in full for the very first time.

Keep up to date with The Vignatis [HERE](#). Listen to The Vignatis [HERE](#).

And please don't forget to send a magazine-sized donation to Aldora Britain Records [HERE](#).

Aldora Britain Records: Hello Tracy and Fabrice, how are you? I am excited to be talking with such a fantastic band from over in California. It is amazing how music can bring us together. Let's start off by travelling back in time. What are some of your earliest musical memories and what was it that first pushed you towards pursuing this passion of yours?

Fabrice: It's a difficult question to answer, as I don't think I chose music as much as music chose me. I recall listening to some gypsy jazz and musette music in the square of my aunt's village's annual party in France at an early age, and then my older brother brought back some vinyl, and we'd listen to them. That's what I recall.

Tracy: I've been told I was singing before I was talking. Some of my earliest memories at around age three or four were my dad buying me a little floor toy organ and a turntable where I would spin vinyl of kids' records and some of my parents' records like Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole, Johnny Mathis, Herb Alpert, The Beatles, and some movie soundtracks. I sang my first solo at my kindergarten Christmas assembly of 'Silent Night'. My mother, who was a big band and jazz combo singer, said I sang perfectly in tune. From that moment forward, like Fabrice, I guess it had chosen me. From there, it was a college voice major studying classical music, then a turn to my first love, jazz, where I stayed.



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Aldora Britain Records: And now, let’s take a leap forward to the present day and a brilliant project of yours out of Los Angeles. The beginnings of The Vignatis must have been an exciting, invigorating time. How did it all come to be? How did you meet each other and what was the initial spark that brought you together on this creative, musical level?

Fabrice: We met at a Buddhist activity by playing music in a big band. At that time, I was playing a lot of gypsy jazz music, and Tracy, working as a jazz singer, became interested in singing in French. She then dusted off her clarinet from high school marching band and early college and got busy. A few years later, we met Quincy Jones at a Grammy event and asked him, ‘What is the future of music?’ He responded with ‘Mixing genres,’ so that’s what we daringly did by mixing the gypsy jazz and rockabilly genres, which is my background, and jazz and country from childhood, being Tracy’s background. That is how Gypsybilly was born.



Aldora Britain Records: You are fresh from releasing an exceptional new album, *Djangobilly: Gypsybilly Vol. 8*. This was also my introduction to your work, so thank you so much for the music. What are your memories from arranging, recording, and releasing it, and how would you say you grew and evolved as artists throughout this process?

Tracy: This album was a long process, starting around 2013 or 2014, by choosing the right Django Reinhardt songs and starting to arrange them. We recorded them a few years later. However, we wanted to add some originals, so we wrote and recorded them. We then discovered that we needed to upgrade the tech and sound quality, so all of the guitar parts had to be re-recorded since we felt they were not matching the quality of the recent recordings. It became obvious that we needed to ask our French friends to be on this album as guest soloists, and they all agreed to grace the album with their presence. Samson Schmitt is on guitar, who is of gypsy royalty, Pierre Blanchard is on violin, who is a disciple of Stéphane Grappelli, and Ludovic Beier, one of the greatest gypsy jazz accordionists in the world. All of these guys are disciples of Django and Grappelli, so we were super thrilled!

The biggest growth was in patience. I wanted to be one and done, and it was a slow burn of nearly ten years from inception to completion. For Fabrice, it was a challenge to find Gypsybilly guitar parts and licks, being intentional to incorporate those four genres. For me, it was all challenging!

Aldora Britain Records: I am definitely drawn in here by your dynamic songcraft and composition. How do you approach this part of your creative process? Is it collaborative or more individual? Are you drawn to specific tones or textures? Is it a case of jamming away and striking gold or is it a more set-in-stone and repeatable process for you?

Tracy: The idea process varies. I have tons of song ideas in my voice memos on my iPhone, so that’s one way. Sometimes we are deliberate and schedule a time to write. I sit at the piano, and Fabrice grabs a guitar so we can find the chord progressions. Melodies can follow simultaneously or later. Lyrics are the same. Lyrics are usually written at a later time unless some hook or something happens immediately. Most of the time, we write together, or we put finishing touches on each other’s ideas. We are not really jam session folks. Just not my jam when it comes to writing! Haha!

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Since this album is instrumental, we focused on the melodies and the best choices of notes and solos. There are only twelve notes, yet many combinations. For vocals, we are always aiming for a good hook, a simple melody on either a simple or complicated chord progression. I developed this rule a long time ago that we both implement, no idea gets discarded for creating a song or to make one better, whether or not it ends up as a Gypsybilly song, or a song in a different style for the future, or for our catalogue for licensing purposes, or for others to record. All ideas get finished!

We thought about adding beats to this *Gypsybilly* instrumental album. That said, we are thinking of doing an entire album of only ‘Electrobilly’ style, which is Gypsybilly with beats. Whether Gypsybilly or Electrobilly, we try to stay true to ourselves and the genre and try our best to make sure that all four styles are present either in harmony, scales, lyrics, arrangement, or sound, etcetera. Tones and textures always seem to follow after the song is written. I can see us focusing on this more if we write a classical piece or some kind of modern orchestral piece.

Aldora Britain Records: When I listen to your recorded output, I definitely get the impression that you would put on an unforgettable live show. I am picturing an immersive, captivating, energetic performance, for sure. What do you aim to bring to the stage as a band, and what can a fan expect from their very first Vignatis live experience?

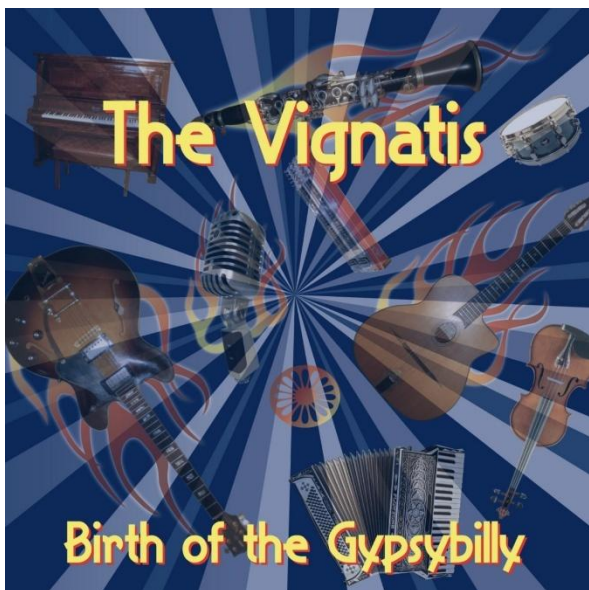
Fabrice: The only goal in mind for our live performance is to connect with the audience. Our humanity and music must pass the stage and impact the listener in some positive way. Whether our presentation is visual or aural, it has to be of great quality. We leave nothing to luck or chance. We are intentional when choosing wardrobe, instrument appearance, instrument tones, lighting, song order and setlist, and to make sure any dialogue is genuine. There must also be an element of spontaneity. Even in the midst of being aware of and controlling all of these performing elements, there has to be spontaneity. We need to try to take each show to the next level or to an unexpected turn. It is pure joy when you know you’ve done your job and the audience feels our authenticity poured into our performance.



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We are fortunate to have microphones in our hands that we can use as tools of encouragement. People come to our shows to be entertained. You never know what someone is going through in life. If we can help relieve someone’s struggle or obstacle, or even laugh for just the length of a song, then we have done our jobs.

Aldora Britain Records: I have been doing some crate-digging over on Bandcamp, leading me to 2009’s *Birth of the Gypsybilly*. This is another stellar snapshot of the band. Thank you for the music! How do you reflect on this outing as a whole now, and is there anything that you would edit or change when looking back with the benefit of hindsight?



Fabrice: No, not really anything I would change. I dedicate my life to writing, recording, and performing this music we created. I am not someone who looks back on the past. I believe that now and the future are what count. In life, we can only move forward, and in art, it is the same. We don’t listen to the songs we wrote in the past. We don’t need to because we perform them. We use the past only to learn from what we did so we can improve the future. The goal, constant improvement.

Tracy: I am pretty much the same way. The present is what is most important. It’s a gift. That is why it is spelled the same way as the meaning of a gift or ‘present’, like a birthday or Christmas present. The present paves the way to the future. That said, we all have some flaws. One little caveat, I always want to redo my parts. When I listen to our past recordings, I always find things I want to redo. It’s a tragic flaw of mine, and we all have some. It’s a thing of mine that I will probably challenge the rest of my life, and that’s okay. The solution, don’t listen to them! Haha!

Aldora Britain Records: As you well know by now, I love that Vignatis sound and your approach to making and creating music. That strong and swinging rockabilly and jazz feel. How would you say this style of yours came about, what goes into it for you, and who are some of your biggest influences and inspirations as an artist currently?

Tracy: We all have musical influences and famous people that inspire us, so I don’t want to repeat some of the obvious folks who are no longer with us. Our approach is a bit different. We draw our inspiration from meeting everyday people and dialoguing with them. You can learn something from anyone. Human beings are social creatures, even though I enjoy hanging out with our big, black, sixteen-pound boy kitty named Thor. When we interact with others, it helps us to grow and self-reflect. It helps us develop compassion and empathy, which seem to be lacking in the world as of late. We do have mentors in both life and music who are highly inspirational. As practitioners of Buddhism, we value the mentor and mentee relationship, which is a core principle of Buddhism. A mentor can be anyone who can guide you with sincerity in hopes that you surpass their success. As artists, we must pay our debt of gratitude to those who came before us, whether it be Beethoven or your childhood neighbour.

Aldora Britain Records: A broad question to finish. There have been a lot of changes in the world in the post-COVID era, both throughout society, with political turmoil and even bloodshed in Ukraine and Palestine, and within the music industry too, AI for example. How would you say these several years have impacted you, both personally and as an artist? How do you think this time has changed the music industry, both for the good and the bad?

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Fabrice: We see the world differently, not as good or as bad. Yin cannot exist without yang. The world and the universe are in constant change, a state of flux, pre and post COVID-19. It's a matter of adapting to changes, even with AI. No choice. AI is not going anywhere, so you can either sh!* or get off the pot. When we attach to what was, it can lock doors to the future. What causes suffering? Attachment. A lot of attachment comes from the past, anchoring us to things that may not serve us well. The beauty of viewing change in this way can enrich one's life. You can hear our discussions on these types of topics in our podcast “*Rock Your Life*” Show [click [HERE](#)] on our website or streaming platforms. We strive to rise above the nonsense to create value via obstacles and the current turmoil in society.

For example, nuclear energy can be extremely destructive due to the use of Plutonium or Uranium. By using the alternative of Thorium, there is significantly less waste, yet it's still nuclear energy. We wrote a song about it entitled ‘Th 232’ [click [HERE](#)] on our album *Let's Hit the Road: Gypsybilly Vol. 3* [click [HERE](#)]. It's a poetic approach to this topic, and we are very proud of the lyrical message. At times on Earth, the sky above can be dark, however, if you fly high enough, the sun shines above the dark clouds. That is the spirit by which we live. Might sound fluffy, but it's how we roll.

Music is a fulltime resident in both of our heads. We strongly feel that the arts and creativity are most important for a balanced society. We live with a sense of responsibility to encourage others to explore and find their creative side and express their lives in creative ways. That should be the mission of the music industry and other fields in the arts. This is our creative definition of ‘rising above’ to create value, not conflict.



Quickfire Round

AB Records: Favourite artist or band? **Fabrice:** Django Reinhardt. **Tracy:** Ella Fitzgerald.

AB Records: Favourite album? **Fabrice:** *Van Halen 1*. **Tracy:** Don't have just one, but here's today's, Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue*.

AB Records: First album you bought with your own money? **Fabrice:** Gene Vincent and the Blues Caps, *Greatest Hits*. **Tracy:** *Carpenters*.

AB Records: Last album you listened to from start to finish? **Fabrice:** Stevie Ray Vaughan, *Texas Flood*. **Tracy:** Pink Floyd, *Dark Side of the Moon*.

AB Records: First gig as an audience member? **Fabrice:** Stray Cats. **Tracy:** Rush.

AB Records: Loudest gig as an audience member? **Fabrice:** Monsters of Rock, Belgium, 1991. **Tracy:** Some stupid dance club in Vegas. I hate loud music, so I wear my custom earplugs (-25db) when I go out. Never leave home without them.

AB Records: Style icon? **Fabrice:** David Bowie. **Tracy:** Miyavi.

AB Records: Favourite film? **Fabrice:** *Unbroken*. **Tracy:** So many, today let's go with *Elf* and *Goodfellas*.

AB Records: Favourite TV show? **Fabrice:** *Breaking Bad*. **Tracy:** Got to thank my dad for this one, the old classic from Rod Serling (1959-1964), *Twilight Zone*.

AB Records: Favourite up and coming artist or band? **Fabrice:** The Vignatis. **Tracy:** The Vignatis!



All views, comments and opinions expressed within are those of the artists and organisations represented. Aldora Britain Records does not necessarily endorse all of these viewpoints.

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