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## Somewhere Cold Records

- \* Living With Hermits

## Titania by Jason

(1183 total words in this text)  
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### **Please introduce yourselves to our readers. Where is Titania based and how did Titania form?**

Michael: Hi Somewhere Cold readers. Our names are Michael Turner and Mandy Cousins, we are based in Edmonton Alberta Canada. Edmonton is somewhere cold indeed, snow on the ground six months of the year... Mandy and I are both originally from England. I moved from Sheffield England when I was 10 years old, Mandy from Colchester when she was 21. The story of how Titania formed is a very long one so will try to keep it brief... Mandy and I met in 1983 when she auditioned for the band I was in at the time. We were involved together in several other projects during the eighties which always seemed to lose momentum and fall apart. In 1991 we formed a new group called The Sensualists with my brother Richard . Richard left shortly after we formed to start his own group. Mandy and I went on to release three albums as The Sensualists, 'Boon' (1992), 'Lovesongs of Chaos and Desire' (1994) and 'Dimming the Glitter of the Stars' (1997). We changed our name to Titania in 1998 after the emergence of the other Sensualists from Portland Oregon.

### **You make lush music with beautiful soundscapes. Can you give us some indication of the recording process and the writing for your S/T?**

Mandy: Our approach to song writing usually starts with Michael coming up with a melody on guitar or piano, then I come along and try something vocally and build a song up from that point. Trying different things until we are satisfied with the results.

Michael: All the writing takes place in a studio environment, we don't jam like most people. We really tried to avoid verse/chorus structure on our last album. I would say the song writing process is more like painting, where you add elements, erase others. The texture of the sounds used is of critical importance. I tend to work quite quickly, recording tons of stuff, most of which is thrown away. Mandy's approach is more slow and deliberate. I would guess about 10% of what we work on is ever finished. Mandy and I are married and also work together at our day job so we are around each other 24 hours a day, which can be a little intense from a musical standpoint.

### **How do you approach writing music? In your opinion, what makes a good song?**

Michael: I would say a good song is one that does it for you in some unexplainable way. Perhaps it might be the melody or the way the instruments sound, a quality in the voice maybe... I myself am always interested in novelty, if something is different in a surprising new way. Lyrics are not of much importance to me, in fact I think they sometimes detract from my listening experience.

### **Besides the artists mentioned in your bio (Brian Eno, Cocteau Twins, etc.), who else might be an influence on your music?**

Michael: I listen to so much stuff, I'm sure it all influences me in some way. Early formative influences would be groups like Wire, Joy Division, Felt, Dif Juz, Durutti Column. Joy Division was the group that really made me want to play music. I listen to lots of electronic music nowadays, I'm not sure that it shows much in our sound though.

### **Mandy, what inspires you to write lyrics? Are there particular motifs or themes you like to write about? Are there any authors that inspire you?**

Mandy: I have to say that my lyrics are very unspecific. Usually they are just a tool to get a good melody. My lyrics are often very fractured and disconnected from one part of a song to another. I'm more comfortable at creating a feeling than telling a story. As far as authors go, there are many I like, I read quite a bit...as far as influencing me ... I don't think they have... at least I don't think they have.

### **"Pale Sister" is one of my favorite songs from you. Is there a story behind this song?**

Mandy: Pale Sister is in my typical fragmented style. I think it was written at a time when I didn't feel I was in

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control of my life, not in the driving seat , so to speak. I needed a bit of a shake, everything was a bit too calm. That was the basic premise of it, although there were other things creeping into it.

### **What are your thoughts on it?**

Mandy: Pale Sister was never an instant favorite with me. I always felt I had to add more to it vocally, it seemed unfinished. In fact it almost didn't make it onto the album. It wasn't until we didn't listen to it for a while that we realized it was quite good. Strangely it is a lot of peoples favorite song on the album, so obviously we are not the best judges of what is good or bad.

### **What is your favorite song that you have written and why?**

Mandy: For me, if I had to name one it would be 'Tinsel Starred'. It came together very quickly. It has a very hypnotic quality I like. The melody of the music and the voice fit so well together. It was so effortless, I can't even remember writing it, it felt like a real gift.

Michael: I don't know if I have a single favorite song. I also tend to like the ones that were the easiest to make as they seem to have less baggage attached to them. Tinsel Starred, Digitaria, and Radiance would be good examples of songs that came easily.

### **For our techies out there, could you give us a run down of your equipment? What do you use in the studio and what do you use when performing live?**

Michael: We record on two ADAT machines (16 tracks ). I use loads of stomp box effects, mostly Electro Harmonix and Boss pedals on guitars. I use a Lexicon Jam Man for looping and sampling. A couple of Quadvverbs for outboard effects. Analog and digital keyboards. Drum machines, drum kit and lots of percussion toys. We haven't played live in a long time but when we did I would play guitar through a little Roland cube amp with backing tapes on DAT. We are much more of a studio creature these days though.

### **What do you see as the future of Titania? Is there an other album in the works?**

Mandy: Right now, just to focus on writing and recording.

Michael: Hopefully we will have new material out early next year. We've been recording lots of new stuff lately. The plan right now is to release two mini albums, one by Titania and one by Angelmark (my instrumental project). We will also hopefully re-release our first album from 1992 in re-mastered, re-packaged form on CD sometime in the not too distant future.

### **What are you listening to now?**

Mandy: The White Birch, Sigur Ros, Wire, Magazine, Rothko, Yellow6 , New Order.

Michael: Current favorites are Rothko, The White Birch, Portrait of David, Yellow6, the new Harold Budd album 'Avalon Sutra'. I really could name lots of others also.

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