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WILL ROTT

Finding Beauty in the Mundane

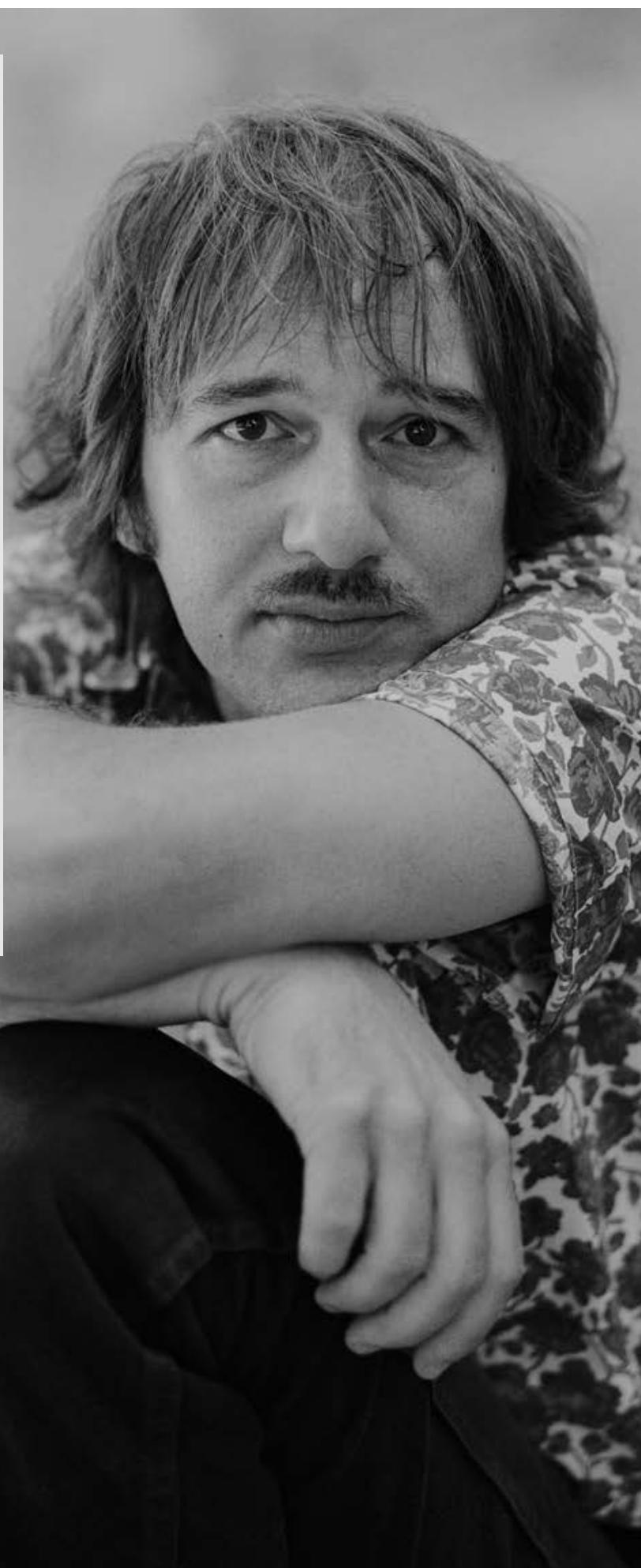
When the world appears to be bursting at the seams, turning to the simplicity of everyday phenomena may just be the panacea we need to rekindle our hope. What was seemingly mundane can suddenly become a hologram of sorts, reflecting and revealing new concepts, understanding, and realities.


For musician and songwriter Will Sprott, relocating from Los Angeles to the small, rural town of Grass Valley—just north of Sacramento—set the stage for his own holographic experience. Instead of the glow of streetlights, it became vultures, rattlesnakes, and coyotes howling at the moon that reflected his new state of mind. Plants in the area caught his eye especially. He stared at them, and they would stare back, “The more you look at plants, the weirder they get and the more they reveal... Plants are just like people.”

The juxtaposition between his life in urban centers and the rural countryside was heightened by the chaos swirling around him like a raging storm. “There were a lot of wildfires. You couldn’t go outside for long periods of time because of smoke,” he recalls. “People who had been hiding away from one another flooded into the streets to protest police murdering Black people. We had a crazy ass president, and he was doing and saying crazy ass shit every day. QAnon and other conspiracists were having a moment.” Once the pandemic became the eye of the storm, the natural world gave Will a new way to process the upheaval outside. This served as the catalyst for his new recording project, *Natural Internet*.

Born and raised in San Jose, Will was drawn to music at an early age. Always healing from consecutive skateboard accidents as a kid, he would use the idle time to go through his mom’s record collection. Those records inspired him to start writing his first songs on piano and guitar. After moving back from college to San Jose, he corralled a ragtag group of fellow musicians and started the band the Mumlers. The band’s eclectic style and live shows earned them accolades among the indie folk scene and strong support from their hometown of San Jose. After recording two albums and embarking on a national tour, the band came to an end. However, Will’s musical and geographic journey was just beginning. Over the next eight years he recorded two solo albums, lived in three different cities, and joined another band.

Will moved to Oakland where he recorded his first solo album, *Vortex Numbers*. The album further refined his soulful vocal





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approach—one that seemed filtered through the ghost of a vaudeville song-and-dance man crooning his way through space and time. Will left Oakland and moved on to Seattle before finding himself in Los Angeles with his partner, La Luz front woman, Shana Cleveland. During his journeys, he recorded his second album, *Tree Fingers*, and became a member of the surf-psych doo-wop band, Shannon and the Clams.

While in Los Angeles, city life began to lose its luster, and he made the decision to try the quiet, rural life. In 2018, the move to Grass Valley was one of the biggest shifts he embarked upon, and he was a little nervous. Fortunately, he thrived in that transitional phase—a motif which shows up in his lyrics quite a bit. In the song “Strange Lines,” from his album *Natural Internet*, he sings, “Going to the next phase / With the gleaming eyes / Fading off of your face / Into another life.”

Natural Internet came to fruition during the pandemic. Like so many of us, Will took in the world through the rotating prism of the internet and felt the alarming disquiet. To combat this feeling, Will simply looked around to his immediate surroundings, finding the beauty in the mundane. Everyday things began to reveal so much more to him, and he remembered the internet wasn’t the only place to connect with others. Becoming a father after his move to Grass Valley shifted him to look through a new lens. “I see so much through [my son’s] eyes now. He’s just figuring out so much every day and is full of hilarious and beautiful observations.”

From the first track, *Natural Internet* plays heavily into the contrast between the dread from current events and the intention to feel fantastical wonder. Each song is a salve that eases the listener into different worlds—where light whimsical melodies parade around introspective lyrics that carry substantial weight. On the slow, dreamy “Bumblebee,” we follow a bumblebee around the garden, but the bee makes clear, “It’s important that you understand / I don’t intend to sting your hand / I’m only working for the queen.” The spooky and spectral “Tear Gas” speaks more directly to police brutality and the violence it perpetuates, “Out in the open / They do all of their crimes / Mash up my brains / And mess up your minds.”

Will is a masterful lyricist and naturally bridges the old with the new—the perfect recipe to concoct his own remedy for negative feelings. As Will says, “I was processing all kinds of dark realities with the writing of these songs and trying to make medicine.” However, just because he is living a tranquil life now doesn’t mean he has slowed down. Will has been touring frequently—recently opening for the Flaming Lips, finishing a new Shannon and the Clams record for a spring release, and writing profusely with a healthy dose of inspiration.

Oh, and he is raising a toddler... 🐾