

Mollie O'Brien and Rich Moore

Sometimes the story is just about the ordinary. No big bang, no big gig, no big promoter or writer hearing the band and telling the rest of the world. Sometimes the story is just about doing what you do and keeping at it. In the case of Mollie O'Brien and Rich Moore it means 30 years of marriage, two kids, numerous day jobs, and making music together and apart.

They met in 1981 at the Denver Folklore Center on April Fool's Day and married a few years later. At the time they were involved in their own bands and working solidly all over Colorado - Mollie was singing with Prosperity Jazz Band, a vintage swing band which featured local luminary Washboard Chaz among others; Rich was playing bass with the rock-steady blues band, The Late Show. Within a year Mollie joined The Late Show, and they attracted notice outside the bar band scene and began playing Colorado blues festivals and concerts. A few years of marriage and two daughters later, things began to change. O'Brien quit the blues band and Moore got a day job that he held until both of their daughters graduated from college. Now, here's how things turned out.

Grammy Award winner Mollie O'Brien became known to the rest of the world as a singer's singer when, in 1988, she and her brother Tim released the first of three critically-acclaimed albums for Sugar Hill Records (*Take Me Back*, *Remember Me* and *Away Out On The Mountain*). Eventually, Mollie recorded five equally well-received solo albums (*Tell It True*, *Big Red Sun* and *Things I Gave Away* for Sugar Hill Records, and *I Never Move Too Soon* and *Everynight In The Week* for Resounding Records). Additionally, she was a regular on the nationally-syndicated radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion" from 2001 through 2005. She's long been known as a singer who doesn't recognize a lot of musical boundaries, and audiences love her fluid ability to make herself at home in any genre while never sacrificing the essence of the song she tackles. O'Brien has primarily focused her efforts on the fading art of interpretation and the end result is a singer at the very top of her game who is not afraid to take risks both vocally and in the material she chooses.

Husband Rich Moore has busied himself in the Colorado music scene for many years. While staying home with the kids when Mollie & Tim toured, he held a day job and continued to perform locally with a variety of Colorado favorites, including Pete Wernick and Celeste Krenz. Not only is Moore known to produce some of the funniest onstage running commentary, he's also a powerhouse guitar player who can keep up with O'Brien's twists and turns from blues to traditional folk to jazz to rock and roll. He creates a band with just his guitar and, as a result, theirs is an equal partnership.

O'Brien and Moore's first duet CD, a live recording titled *900 Baseline* (Remington Road Records) was released in 2006. Their first studio project, *Saints & Sinners* (Remington Road Records), was released to nationwide acclaim in 2010. In January 2014 they'll release their followup, *Love Runner* (Remington Road Records). Both studio projects were produced by Lyons, CO ace arranger and bassist, Eric Thorin, who often joins them onstage for their live shows. All three CDs showcase their talent for unlocking the secrets to a diverse array of songs in authoritative yet very fun and unusual arrangements.

For their latest release, *Love Runner*, they again enlisted their talented friends, Glenn Taylor (pedal steel), John Magnie (piano and accordion), Eric Moon (piano and organ) and Marc Dalio (drums). When one song called out for a musical saw, they were lucky enough to discover the wondrous Lesley Kernochan.



Irish fiddler Jessie Burns put her lyrical stamp on a few folk songs. And, happily for O'Brien and Moore, their daughters Brigid and Lucy were able to make the date for the background vocal session.

Love Runner features three songs written by Mollie and Rich - the rocking title track, the autobiographical 40's swing-like "Went Back Home," and a powerhouse turn at the traditional gospel song, "Don't Let The Devil Ride." Once again, they have unearthed some hidden gems: Tom Paxton's newly-written "Central Square" is about first love; Robin and Linda Williams's and Jerome Clark's "Green Summertime" is a gorgeous paean to a small town world called home; Hal Cannon's "Just Go" places the listener squarely in the front seat next to a woman leaving a ruinous relationship in the dust. O'Brien and Moore also put their stamp on the inimitable Dave Van Ronk's "Sunday Street" and on Randy Newman's eerie "Suzanne" - both songs normally sung from a male point of view but, when given Mollie's gimlet-eyed take, become even more unique for their devil-may-care breeziness and swagger.

The band assembled for these sessions (all old friends), are listeners and never let their parts overshadow the lyrics and guitar sounds. Minimal preproduction rehearsals made for fewer preconceptions and once they were all together playing live in the studio the band made bold leaps to create the mood Mollie, Rich and Eric wanted. There's definitely a locked-in feeling you get with each track - something that can only happen live and only with such intuitive and responsive musicians. And as for Eric, sitting in the producer's chair, he found that sometimes departing from the master plan can create unique outcomes for every take.

Says Thorin, "Every time Mollie sings you'd better be recording. There are no scratch tracks. Rich is a favorite co-conspirator and sublime orchestrator on the guitar. They don't take themselves or anyone else too seriously or let anyone else ride that train. The studio banter is cutting, joyful and in the moment and they carry that to the stage with astonishing ease."

Most of the tracks on *Love Runner* have to do with the universal theme of home: leaving it and family behind; missing it; never *wanting* to go back; finding it in surprising places all over the world; wondering what kind of "home" awaits us in the life after this one. O'Brien and Moore let us know via their choice of material that they are not afraid to take risks. It's almost as if they're telling us that at this stage in their lives, they are at home with their musical selves - they can do whatever they want and they don't care if the rest of the world agrees with them.

To quote the one and only Cher, "In this business, it takes time to be really good." Mollie O'Brien and Rich Moore are proof that age is no obstacle to making timeless, original and inventive music.

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