



Downpilot

The Forecast

CD / LP / digital
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Tracklisting

- 1) Black Eye
- 2) Totems
- 3) My Favorite Neighborhood
- 4) Red Desert
- 5) Strangers Hotel
- 6) Balancer
- 7) Antfinger
- 8) Night Shade
- 9) On the Way
- 10) The Forecast



Promotion:

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Downpilot is ostensibly the solo project of singer/songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and recording/mix engineer Paul Hiraga. For the last **four** albums, Hiraga has recorded and mixed single-handedly, which has given his work a seasoned clarity, and his seventh album, *The Forecast*, is the boldest, most exquisitely crafted Downpilot album to date.

A trip across multiple decades with influences subtly ranging from the melodic Laurel Canyon-esque ballads ("Balancer"), to Baroque and Sunshine Pop of the late 60s and 70s ("Strangers Hotel"), to 90s Britpop ("Red Desert"), all with a 21st-Century spin, it's nothing less than an achievement that *The Forecast* hangs together so wonderfully as a cohesive body of work.

The crystalline intro to "Black Eye", the album's opener, showcases Hiraga's voice, which has a richness and raspy expressiveness that has never sounded better than it does on this album. "Black Eye" is one of Hiraga's finest songs to date with one of the catchiest choruses in the Downpilot catalog.

Hiraga has long been exploring a range of themes in his songwriting: the inevitability of change, the mystery and beauty of nature, the varied histories of places and people, the complexity of human relationships, and the uncertainty of the future. He is a Seattle-based artist, and the Pacific Northwest is a palpable presence – it has gotten into his blood, and it seeps into the songs. With the sparse and delightfully rhythmic "Totems," he evokes the distant past of the region, interweaving it with individual and personal narratives.

The intoxicated twang of "Night Shade" underpins a lament on things lost, while shimmery guitar and three-part vocals on "Balancer" take a bow to CSN, making a layered bed for a poetic love song. The melodic chorus of "Strangers Hotel," a symphony of strings, piano, and obscure oddball keyboards underpins a philosophical exploration of memory and the nature of reality.

One of the albums most exciting moments appears with "Red Desert," a desolate urban vision with a transcendent violin from virtuoso Melinda Rice, who contributes string parts on several songs. Hiraga has also included longtime Downpilot members Jeff Brown and Anne Marie Ruljancich (Walkabouts) along with Terry de Castro (The Wedding Present) to add a few vocal nuances throughout the album, with Brown's harmonies adding a soaring quality to "Favorite Neighborhood."

Ending with the title track, this may not be the sunniest of forecasts but it is not without hope. Ultimately this is a life-affirming album that dips effortlessly into different styles while maintaining Downpilot's unmistakable musical identity. Loyal fans will not be disappointed, as the *The Forecast* contains plenty of signature sounds, themes, and motifs. But this new collection of superbly crafted pop songs could also open the field to new listeners.