

H Y D R A

C O I L

*The music of Aaron Marshall & Marcus Aurelius*







Recording ambient noise in the field. Left to right: Marcus Aurelius Klonek, Aaron Marshall

**Walk deep into a forest. Close your eyes. Imagine the nature around you is a symphony from the future playing just for you.**

### What you will hear is Hydra Coil.

Hydra Coil is a musical collaboration between Aaron Marshall and Marcus Aurelius Klonek. Aaron and Marcus are producers that have been making music since the mid 90's. Specifically, ambient music. If you like Biosphere, Vangelis, Orbital, Plaid, Boards of Canada, Jean Michel Jarre, Sounds from the Ground, FSOL, Robert Miles, and/or Max Richter, you will like Hydra Coil.

Currently living 2,500 miles apart, Aaron and Marcus are collaborating on their third studio album. In April 2013, Aaron left his home near Bloomington, Indiana to visit Marcus in Vancouver, British Columbia. They spent a lot of time gathering inspiration for their new album. Diana and I caught up with the band to learn more about who they are, what they are doing, and how they do it.

**Aaron:** We're hoping to continue the evolution of the journey. NOVA was a creation mythology. Aether was the sentient consciousness rising from the creation mythology. The new album is in its infancy, and a lot of the time works come out how they want. You can only roughly guide them. The direction we're headed is the next chapter of that sentient experience. Perhaps an exodus to other places, and entering strange and wonderful new worlds.

**Marcus:** We're really trying to explore new territories with our music. I think we're both interested in leaving the safe harbours and delving deeper.

**Even in the age of the internet, physical distance in a relationship can sometimes be a problem. Have you guys ever felt that the distance between you both has made it more difficult to produce albums together?**

**Marcus:** Well when we produced Nova and Aether, we both lived in California but we still had our own studios to work in. I think we work really well that way; bouncing ideas back and forth and then refining and sculpting them into full pieces. This will be our first sizeable long distance project.

I do think it's great to be able to work, and then meet up later to talk about it. In California we would take off for portions of the day and just drive, or go for lunch while the work mulled over in the back of our minds.

### Who is Hydra Coil?

**Marcus:** Hydra Coil is a musical collaboration between Aaron Marshall and Marcus Aurelius Klonek. Our collaboration has grown from many years of friendship and mutual respect.

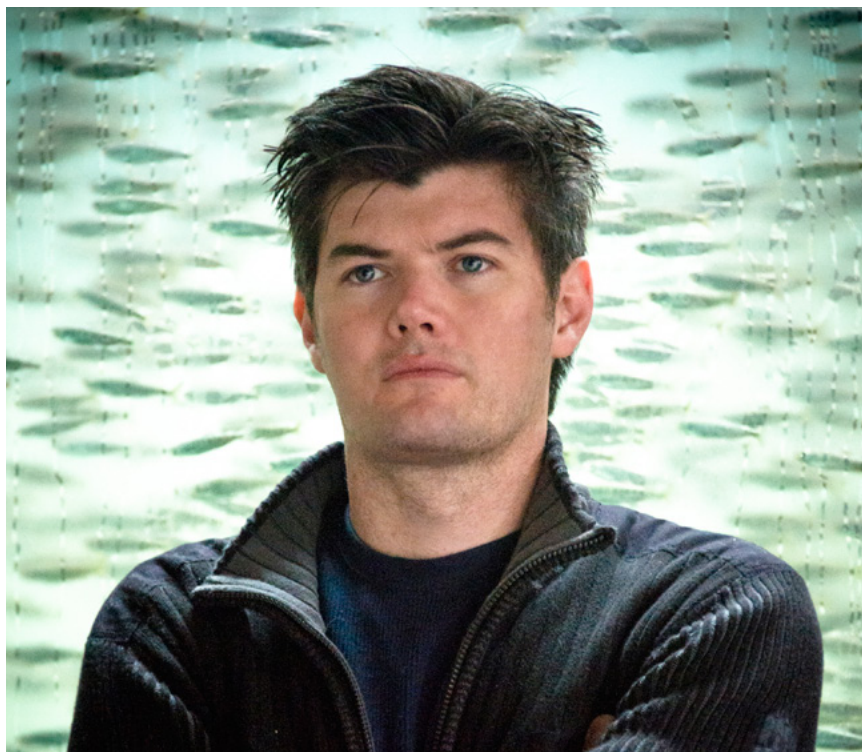
**Aaron:** Hydra Coil is a collaboration between Marcus Aurelius Klonek and Aaron Marshall. We're two ambient producers with a history in the genre.

**What are you aiming to achieve with this new album?**



*“We both have distinct visions, but they work so harmoniously.”*

Still, we spend most of our time in different corners of the globe. Yet, it's never too long between visits. We are super excited to be working again!



Aaron Marshall

**Aaron:** I think our processes are so separate that it doesn't make a whole lot of difference. We think and approach mixes very differently. That's a huge part of what makes it good, and surprising. We'll send each other a base of music or just raw sound and add to it. We've worked side by side on material as well. It's a neat experience, but I think we work better in our own workstation environments. We

both have our systems rigged up in specific ways. He produces some great vibes in his monitoring space, but when I step into it, it feels very foreign to me. The bass response off, the midrange doesn't sound quite right, but he nails his musical goals. He knows his space like I know mine. It takes a lot of time to adjust into it. Again, the difference in freq. response that we perceive adds to the collaborative process. It gives us different windows into the mix.

We see each other in person as much as we can. It's funny because we usually don't talk directly about music. We stick to a lot of subject matter that inspires us. We talk very abstractly about music and leave the actual music making in the studio.

**This will be Hydra Coil's third album. Has each of your albums followed the same creation process or has the process morphed since your first album, Nova? Could you please elaborate on the process you guys go through to create a finished album?**

**Aaron:** We start a series of musical sketches and then expand their compositional depth & refine the mixes. Sometimes we work more on a track to track basis eg. we'll start a track, pretty much finish it and move on to the next

one. Sometimes we'll have 7,8, or 9 sketches in line working on their compositions. The intense mixing process comes a bit later once the structural/arrangement material is settled. I think NOVA was more of a track to track type of thing where we finished a track and moved on.

**Marcus:** We both use a similar toolset which makes sharing a project a lot easier. In some ways we've built upon our tools, and in others actually refined and stripped it down. I think our strengths are really beginning to shine which has aided our approach to the project as a whole.

**What is your favorite part about making music?**

**Marcus:** Sometimes I just dial back my intellect and let the audio take control. I love being taken by a strong musical movement that just seems to grow every time I interact with it. I love when ideas flow freely and come together like that. The experience is continued when I hand the files to Aaron and he discovers layers in the movement I didn't even know existed.

**Aaron:** I think now, the best part to me is learning new approaches to compositions, and rising to new plateaus in engineering with each album. I'll stumble on a unique way of doing something out of an instinctive need to achieve a goal. I like those discoveries.

**How did you both meet?**

**Aaron:** We met on mp3.com in the late 90's. We both liked what the other was doing.

**Marcus:** We met back in 1998-9 on MP3.com. We found each other there and began contact. I think I donated \$10 to his page (a new feature at the time) and he immediately returned the favour.



Marcus Aurelius Klonek

We discovered a similar kinship and friendship which has grown ever stronger over the years.

**How long after meeting did you decide to make music together?**

**Marcus:** Almost immediately! Our collaboration wasn't necessarily successful at the time, but we already knew we



wanted to work together. The ideas began to form pretty early on. In 2005 Aaron came to Australia where I lived at the time and we began producing some early concepts. Our first piece was Stranded, which helped define a sound we both loved. And with that, Hydra Coil was born!

**Aaron:** It was quite a while. I think we made our first tune together in 2004 that was a prototype to how we would work in the future. It was called "Stranded". It's still a haunting little tune that holds up.

### Why did you decide to make music together?

**Aaron:** "Stranded" planted a seed that simply had to germinate.

**Marcus:** I think I inadvertently answered this question in the previous question.

### How/why did Hydra Coil form?

**Aaron:** We wanted a name to work under as collaborators. We had a lot of overlapping interest in some esoteric ambient music.

### What kind of gear, soft and hard, do you guys use? What is your favorite piece of gear?

**Marcus:** We use very similar tools. We sequence in Cubase and we've both used Audition since the 90's (back when it was still called Cool Edit Pro.) My favourite tool is the Eventide 7000. It does amazing things to audio.

**Aaron:** Hardware: I use RME converters, Dynaudio monitors, a couple of custom preamps, patchbay, a cheap compressor Alesis 3630, that's basically it hardware wise. Software: Cubase, lots of Native Instruments, Spectrasonics, I also use Adobe Audition.

### Aaron, why do you make music?

**Aaron:** Someone asked my friend, "Does Hugo (my son) like music?" and not sure what to say she responded, "He IS music". I liked that response. I think we're all music. We're all capable of creating & expressing art. Only a few of us allow ourselves. The rhetorical question is; why don't we all make music?

### Marcus, why do you make music?

**Marcus:** That's a big topic, but if I had to list a main reason it'd be the ability to create and explore other worlds through sound, especially with ambient music.

### Currently Hydra Coil is producing ambient electronica music. If forced to change genres, where would you guys take Hydra Coil's sound?

**Marcus:** We've talked about branching into other genres, but I think our sound will always stem from that core sound that we've been building on. We have talked about recording more live elements such as guitars, drums, voices. We're definitely interested in trying new things.

**Aaron:** I think we'd take it in a rock/pop direction. We're very influenced by bands like Depeche Mode, Tears for Fears, Air & lots of tasty melodic music that is universally appealing. We've headed closer in that direction and have discussed adding our own vocals into the mix. I'm not sure it would be a matter of being forced to change genres, but a natural evolution.





### 5 years from now, how do you envision Hydra Coil's future?

**Aaron:** I hope we can start to do live performance. I know Marcus and I have spoken about creating sets, and having far out interactive experiences with fans.

**Marcus:** One thing we've been talking about for years is doing live shows. That would be an exciting step for us.

### If Hydra Coil was an existing film director, dead or alive, who would it be and why?

**Marcus:** Well, I've never thought about that. I think our music is definitely inspired by some great films. I think our music has the scope and beauty of an old Ridley Scott film, but also the abstract hypnotic nature of David Lynch.

**Aaron:** I think Marcus and I would have different answers. It would be like two directors coming together to create



### If Hydra Coil was given the opportunity to compose the soundtrack for an upcoming film, who would be the director of the film?

**Aaron:** Who would I want it to be? Aaron Marshall... ha! This would be a hard one to answer. I think if any director was

*“Sometimes I just dial back my intellect and let the audio take control.”*

something. We both have distinct visions, but they work so harmoniously. I would say in regards to Hydra Coil, Darren Aronofsky. His themes are always rich, and they're executed with such care while still holding onto a natural unforced feeling. That's at least what I try my hardest to bring to the project.

doing something of quality we'd jump at it. It would be a better experience scoring something outside of the mainstream. That way you would have the freedom to experiment. Something within the mainstream like Tron could be super fun too. The film itself would be a more important deciding factor than the director.

**Marcus:** I really loved the 2010 Tron. I feel like it returned to an era of movies that had been lost for quite some time. I would love to work on such a project.

### Do you guys use Mac or PC?

**Marcus:** I began making music in the late 90s which was the era of the PC. We've really grown into that workflow. I've never dabbled with any other system. I'm definitely an enthusiast and enjoy modding and refining my PC rig.

**Aaron:** PC. I've flirted with the idea of going with Mac. I do see their appeal. I quite like OSX. They just can't run all of the software I use. Plus, it comes down to cost. When you price a Mac it's like 2x the cost for half of the machine you could get with a well built PC.

### What inspires Hydra Coil's sound?

**Aaron:** Nature, other music and media we like, and literature.

**Marcus:** Aaron and I share a love of great films and nostalgic video games. Our travels continually inspire







us as well. We've drawn great influence from the fjords of Norway, the oceans and mountains of Australia and the vast wilderness of the West Coast as well as Aarons home in the forested hills of Indiana.

**In your past two albums, I notice a lot of environmental sounds, such as rain, wind, and water. How do you acquire these sounds and why do you choose to use them?**

**Marcus:** For us, production usually begins by going out into the field. I think exploring and doing recordings like this really helps us connect to an area and establish a strong vision for the project.

**Aaron:** We go out with field recorders and capture soundscapes that inspire us. It's

just another instrument in the mix. Usually they have something to do with the tracks, for example, in our track *Headlands* we recorded sounds in the Marin Headlands above San Francisco. Other times it's more abstract. We audition the sounds and find what meshes and feels right.

**What do each of you enjoy doing in your free time?**

**Aaron:** I like nature. I love to hike and spend time with my son. I'm big into photography. I love studying and refining all sorts of different crafts. I love to learn and grow.

**Marcus:** I'm a huge fan of films and great video games. I also love writing, I'm working on scripts for films I'd like to make.

**Where do you hope your lives will be in 10 years? The overall picture of your life, not just music.**

**Marcus:** I hope that I'll have a feature under my belt by then. I'm working towards producing my fantasy film.

**Aaron:** I live my life pretty much on a constant and in the present. I don't really have hopes for 1 week, 6 months, 1 year, or a decade down the line other than the practical, or maybe trivial things. I hope I am healthy, productive, loving, and always learning more; things that I am now. I don't have many expectations or care of what I will morph into in 10 years if I am striving for the best in the present. Everything will line up.

Hydra Coil's first and second studio albums, *NOVA* and *Aether*, are out now on iTunes, Amazon, and on their music label website [www.anandablissharmonies.com](http://www.anandablissharmonies.com). For Hydra Coil up to date details see [www.hydracoil.com](http://www.hydracoil.com). ★

