

FATHER AND SON

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Main Photo: Alan Holbrook

Dr Errol H. Tout's son Sam reflects on his father's life and passing upon the posthumous release of his album, 'Small Window Large View'...

A beloved figure in the WA music scene, as well as the corridors of architectural academia, Dr Errol H. Tout passed away in November after a courageous, 10-year battle with cancer.

It was by no means a decade of sombre contemplation. Going back to the 1980s when he was a young firebrand virtuoso guitarist who was accepted into the tutelage of none other than Robert Fripp, Errol was a prolific creative force. Following suit, in the difficult latter years, despite the intense physical demands placed on him by ongoing treatments, he recorded and released four albums – including the new posthumous release, *Small Window Large View* – over that decade.

"It's a part of a continuum of one's life work," Errol told this writer upon the release of his 2021 album, *Dancing About Architecture*.

"It's another chapter, and there's lots more to come. I kind of like that – doing stuff and moving on, then moving on and moving on. Doing something better and different and in other ways than before... but it's nice working with these same people because they're just so bloody good!"

One of those bloody good people is Errol's son, creative collaborator and music curator, Sam, who has brought *Small Window Large View* to its fulfilment.

"He finished off mixing *Dancing About Architecture*, sent it off to the label and pretty much immediately after he'd done that started work on the new album and never really stopped," Sam explains.

"It's how he ended up with all these albums because pretty much ever since 1984 when he started working on *Atmospherics*, he was always either finishing an album or starting the next one.

"It's quite a body of work, and it goes through all the different segments of his life. It's a great thing to have after he's gone... to be able to listen to it all."



Errol Tout, circa 1992

In 2012, a week after his mother had died, Errol was informed that he had blood clots on his lungs and a two-kilogram tumour on his kidney. He was given roughly year to live, but the spirited Mr Tout was having none of that and sought new and potentially risky treatment.

"Basically, everybody said, 'there's not really much we can do, you're gone'," Sam recalls. "He just didn't accept that and then started talking to another doctor in Melbourne who was like, 'we can give that a go, but you'll probably die on the table. But you know, if you're willing to take the risk come over'. He did, and they did this crazy 10-hour-procedure, chopped him in half and put him back together again and he lived another 10 years.

"He always was at the front of experimental treatments that had never been tried before, but I think he just wanted to keep going and wanted to keep doing stuff so much that he just allowed himself to be poked and prodded all that time. He had a very, very uncomfortable last 10 years but he just kind of got on with it."

Errol's dedication to craft and his ability to be prolific had long been proven, but the quietening down of his life – and the constant reminders of his mortality – seemed to drive his desire to leave behind a remarkable creative legacy.

"Probably because once he became really quite ill he obviously had to stop working as an architect," Sam says, (*Errol was Head of the Department of Architecture & Interior Architecture at Curtin University of Technology until 2008, then worked as a Senior Lecturer and Chair of the Science and Technology Stream*).

"And he couldn't play live anymore because it was all a bit much. So he was left with a lot of time at home, and I think he just kind of put all that time into working on music. And that's how when he had cancer, he recorded four albums in the time that he was sick."

Errol documented his busy creative life with Facebook posts of his "modest, yet tidy studio." More often than not Sam would be featured in these images, as he collaborated with his father's constantly growing stream of new music.

"I used to go every weekend and hang out there," Sam recalls. "He would always run the tracks past me, and I would always say, 'Oh, that's good' or 'that's shit, change that bit'. I was always quite involved in the arrangements and I recorded the keyboard parts for the last few albums and a few other songs we worked on together.

"So that was always a cool thing for us to do. He would send me 25 different tracks that he had for the latest album or something and he'd say, 'can you go through and cull them down to 12?' (*laughs*). He just wanted another person's opinion."



Sam Tout. Photo by Sampson McCrackan

The opinion of his son, most importantly, Sam is close to all the music on the new album, but there are some tracks that truly speak to him.

"Yeah, there's a few nice tracks... there's one called *Pumpin' Pulse*, which is track number two. Dad wrote it in, I think, 1990 and had played it live. There's a video of him playing it live but then he'd never really got around to recording it.

"He and I worked on the arrangement with Mike (*Gorman*) as well and put that together. I was really happy with how that worked out and I played the piano part on it. That was a nice one that we worked on together, which is cool."

"*Car 54* has a really creative guitar part that is something I've never really heard before. I've put together a music video for that one based off of old footage that we had and that will that will come out with the album, which will be cool. So those two are probably the ones that speak to me the most just because I have more involvement in those ones."

The opening track on the album, *Spoice Journey*, also has a poignance which speaks to Errol's gentle encouragement over the years for Sam – a multi-instrumentalist who plays bass in alternative/blues/rock trio, Redcliffe – to play the guitar.

"Dad and I both played guitar on that," he notes. "So I play the guitar on the left channel, and he plays guitar on the right channel and we kind of spent a day working on that together in early 2022.

"And I think that was the last time that we recorded together, actually. That was a good experience doing that. I think he was pretty happy to see me pick up a guitar."

Small Window Large View features the wondrous guitar work of Errol and Mike Gorman, with the rhythm section of Roy Martinez and Ric Eastman and Sam on keyboards.

Guitars and keyboards were recorded in Errol's "modest but tidy studio," with bass and drums recorded by Lee Buddle at Crank Recording. The album was mixed and mastered by Tony Geballe in New York.

Small Window Large View will be launched on Monday, January 16 at The Ellington Jazz Club. It will see songs from all parts of Errol's career performed by guitarists Mike Gorman, Glenn Winter-Smith, Graham Greene and Greg Dear, with Ric Eastman on drums and Sam Tout on bass/keys.

All proceeds will be donated to cancer research.

Both moving and playful, the 13 tracks are testament to Errol's unique approach to composition and his dedication to his instrument. The album title itself – *Small Window Large View* – seems to hint at a design for living.

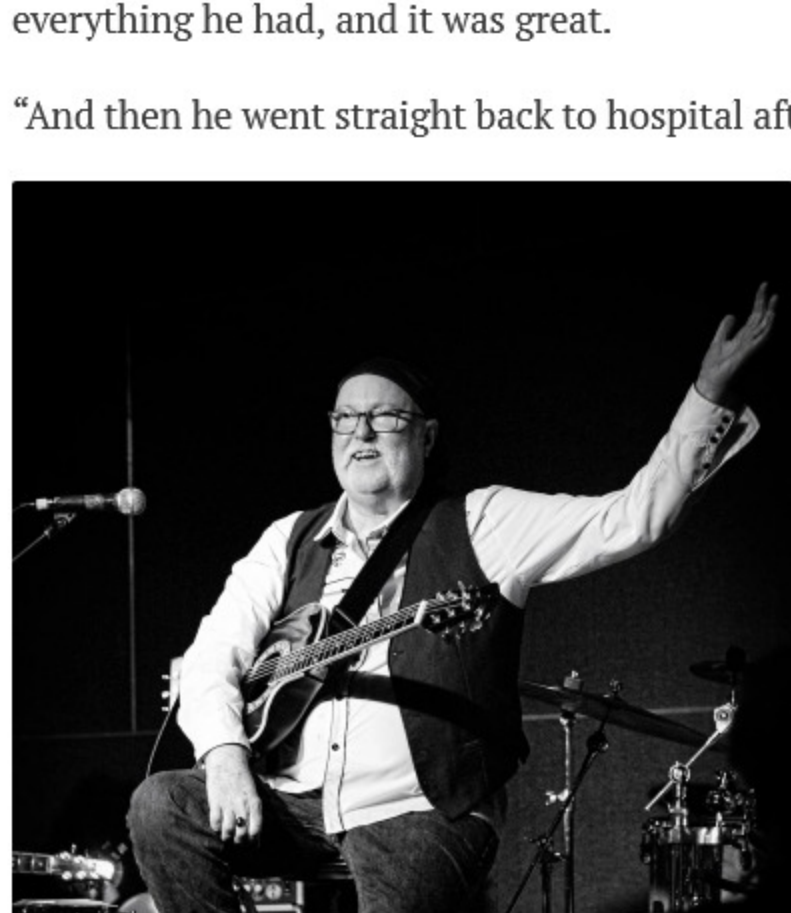
"I don't recall him ever telling me a meaning about it," Sam says, "but I've done a little bit of thinking about it myself. And I think it could potentially be about your outlook on life and making the most of things.

"Which Errol *did*... because if you think about it, he had a very small window, but he had a large view. He had a lot of barriers and things holding him back, but he just ignored all that and did so much anyway."

Sam cites as a perfect example of this being Errol's commitment to performing the album launch show for *Dancing About Architecture* in September 2021.

"He was incredibly unwell," Sam reflects. "He was in hospital and could barely walk, but he had the gig booked and he was determined to get there, if it was the last thing he did. So we broke him out of hospital, and they pumped him up full of drugs and we wheeled him over onto the stage. Then he played and really it gave it everything he had, and it was great.

"And then he went straight back to hospital afterwards. He was just relentless."



Errol Tout RIP. Photo by Skip Watkins

Sam has become the curator of Errol's recorded work since his passing but in another sense he already was. It's a role that is clearly of the utmost importance to him.

"About a year ago, it occurred to me that Dad had all these albums, but they were all sitting on a shelf. Just physical copies – like records and CDs and stuff – but not much out there online for people to listen to, if they don't have a copy. And of course all the original copies of his albums are sold out.

"So I went through and scanned all the covers and digitised some of the tracks and put them all up so that people can listen to them forever now. So I'm very glad that we got to do that, and he got to see that while he was still alive, which was awesome. He loved knowing that people were still listening to his albums that were 35 years old or whatever.

"Pretty much the whole back catalogue is now up there on all the streaming platforms it can be listened to forever now which is great."

***Small Window Large View* – along with Errol's entire recorded catalogue – is available on Bandcamp and all streaming platforms from January 10.**

3 thoughts on "FATHER AND SON"

cynthiadiscratesonline
January 6, 2023 at 10:12 pm
Great article. Note the final photo was taken by professional photographer Skip Watkins at the conclusion of Errol's last live concert in September 2021.

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bobgordonplusone
January 7, 2023 at 3:58 am
Thanks so much for letting me know. Have added the photo credit.

Cheers,

Bob

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