

Mike O'Brien to release new album with intimate country-folk tones on April 17 via chouchou records

[Mike O'Brien](#), the singer-songwriter and guitarist from Montreal who has accompanied the likes of Adam Cohen and Lisa Leblanc in studio and Elisapie on stage, announced today the release of his eponymous album on April 17, under [chouchou records](#). It will be O'Brien's first available solo album. O'Brien is also a member of the country duo Sin and Swoon and of the band El Coyote.

For this album, Mike collaborated with bass player Andrew Horton and producer Howard Bilterman, whose past collaborations include Arcade Fire and Godspeed You! Black Emperor. Michelle Tompkins adds her voice to some of the songs. The album was recorded in just two days at Bilterman's studio, [Hotel2Tango](#). The result is a country-folk album with ten moving songs, some very intimate, others rather lively. Even though the songs were recorded in only a few takes, their writing process sometimes took years. "Some of these songs only took me a couple of hours to write, but I'll admit I tend to write a lot of drafts before the final product. Most of these songs took months and even years before I came across their final version."

It's the case with "Raincloud", released in the beginning of March: Mike wrote it in snippets while he and his wife were waiting for their first child. Inspired by Western music (think about Tex Williams) and the cartoonish universe of Disney, the song opens slowly with a warm-sounding, comforting guitar. Between the creaking chair on which O'Brien plays and his breathing so close to the microphone, there's an immediate proximity the musician creates with his listeners.

Mike on "Raincloud": "I have a soft spot for classic Disney cartoons. I was especially influenced by the Sherman brothers. I taught music for some years at primary school and we'd sometimes sing their songs in class. I really wanted to write in that style, to keep things simple and at the same time try to express what echoed inside of me."

Like a cartoon or a children's story concealing important life lessons, Mike can say a lot with very little. His work conveys a simplicity in its imagery that listeners can interpret as they wish. This intimacy within O'Brien's music flows naturally, in part because of the tangible sincerity of his interpretation. "In writing 'Raincloud', I wanted to unearth the hope we can feel in difficult times. When I think about it now, in the beginning, singing it was almost like a prayer for me. The song helped me a bit." Incidentally, all the released songs come with old family pictures, like the one on record's sleeve—a picture of Mike's grinning grandfather on rowboat. Mike on the visuals of his album: "The family pictures I used on the sleeve and the singles give me a sense of belonging, of calm, of being supported. It's cool to think they're a part of the project. I love the picture of my great-aunt gone fishing on a boat—she was a nun in a faraway corner of Ontario. And I've always loved the photograph of my grandfather in the rowboat. I remember that smile. I miss him a lot!"

Like "Raincloud," writing "Le Prix" took years—nearly seven years. In composing his songs, Mike constantly wonders about their meaning, their *raison d'être*. "Writing songs feels like you're in a mine: it's pitch-black, you walk, you dig, you try to find the way." Mike on "Le Prix": "I was often being asked what the lyrics meant, and it was really vague—I didn't really know. It's only recently, while I was shoveling outside, that I finally understood. I remembered a situation from when I was younger, and it all made sense. I told myself, okay, now whenever I sing this song

I'll think back to that moment." When we listen to Mike O'Brien's album, we too feel the time that he takes to build, dissect and play his songs until he finds their meaning. The subject of the songs isn't as important as feeling their undeniable sincerity. Listeners will feel spoiled and lucky to have access to these songs that each form their own little world. On the album and on stage, Mike personifies them, and between him and the audience an invisible cord is woven: an exchange of quiet strength that is rarely felt, but that will be cherished for a long time.

Mike O'Brien will be available on April 17th via chouchou records.