

10,000 Maniacs Biography

One of the most critically acclaimed bands of the last three decades, 10,000 Maniacs were founded by Robert Buck, Dennis Drew, Steven Gustafson, John Lombardo and Natalie Merchant in the fall of 1981. Jerry Augustyniak joined in 1983. Together with artists like R.E.M. they defined *college rock* and created the first wave of *alternative* rock bands and what became known as the *alternative rock* format on FM radio.

Writing and performing powerful, danceable and socially conscious original material in and around their hometown of Jamestown, New York the group toured extensively and produced two independently released records, *Human Conflict Number Five* ('82) and *Secrets of the I Ching* ('83) on their own Christian Burial Music label.

By producing, manufacturing and marketing their own recordings 10,000 Maniacs were one of the original "indie" bands before signing with Elektra Records and making *The Wishing Chair* in 1985 with producer Joe Boyd (Fairport Convention, Nick Drake, REM). After touring extensively with REM and though out Europe John Lombardo left the band in July of 1986 and the band continued as a 5 piece.

In 1987 the Maniacs recorded and released *In My Tribe*. Produced by Peter Asher (James Taylor, Linda Ronstadt) this album broke into the charts, where it stayed 77 weeks, peaking at #37 and selling over two million copies. *In My Tribe* featured the hit singles "Don't Talk," "Hey Jack Kerouac," "Like The Weather" and "What's The Matter Here?" It was voted **one of the 100 most important releases of the decade by *Rolling Stone Magazine***.

1988 saw the band debut on national television with appearances on The Tonight Show, Late Night with David Letterman and Saturday Night Live.

Blind Man's Zoo, the 1989 follow-up, hit #13 on the Billboard charts and went platinum. It featured the hit singles, "Trouble Me and "Eat For Two." The following world tour featured several European festivals, a string of US amphitheatres and the renowned Fourth of July concert with the Grateful Dead in front of 80,000 in Buffalo NY.

In 1990 the band released a compilation of their first two independent recordings called *Hope Chest: The Fredonia Recordings* along with a companion video entitled *Time Capsule*.

Our Time in Eden was released in 1992, and featured the hit singles, "Candy Everybody Wants" and "These Are Days" selling more than three million copies. Rolling Stone's four-star review called it a "...gripping new album ...with a provocative, unnerving power."

A second Saturday Night Live appearance on Halloween '92, preceded the Maniacs memorable performance at Bill Clinton's MTV Inaugural Ball where host Dennis Miller famously referred to them as "*Chelsea Clinton's favorite band*".

10,000 Maniacs has the added distinction of launching the career of singer-songwriter Natalie Merchant, best known for her successful 1995 solo album *Tigerlily* (Elektra).

MTV Unplugged was released a few months after her departure, featuring a remake of the classic, "Because the Night." The record sold 4 million copies.

10,000 Maniacs continued without Merchant, bringing back John Lombardo and adding Mary Ramsey in 1994.

In November 1995, the Maniacs played dates in Cleveland and Chicago. *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* remarked of their Agora Ballroom show: "*The band showed a sold-out crowd the path to its surprisingly smooth and viable rebirth...Saddled with the unenviable task of filling Merchant's shoes, Ramsey brilliantly rose to the occasion*"

The new lineup released *Love Among the Ruins* for Geffen Records in 1997, featuring a cover of Roxy Music's "More Than This," which went to #24 on the Billboard charts, the highest-charting single in the band's history.

The Chicago Tribune noted "*If the 11 new singles rolled out are any indication of things to come, the new incarnation of 10,000 Maniacs may eclipse the old*" and the Chicago Sun Times simply said, "*Natalie Who?*"

10,000 Maniacs continued their grinding touring schedule, finding new fans in Mexico, Portugal and Brazil.

In 1999, the band released *The Earth Pressed Flat* on Bar/None. An Album that *Angelfire.com* called "*...arguably 10,000 Maniacs' greatest achievement, the perfect post-punk Celtic folk rock album.*"

In December of 2000 founding member Robert Buck died at the age of 42. After a three-year hiatus the Maniacs returned in 2003 with long time friend and former guitar tech Jeff Erickson on lead guitar.

In 2004, Elektra/Asylum/Rhino Records released *Campfire Songs: The Popular, Obscure and Unknown Recordings*, a two CD set compilation featuring a broad array of their groundbreaking music including several unreleased tracks.

In 2013 10,000 Maniacs released their first full-length album in 13 years. ***Music From The Motion Picture***, was hailed as a beautiful affirmation of the band's

classic poetic lyrics and dreamy Americana blend. The independent release was crowd-funded through Pledgemusic.com

Today finds the band approaching their 33rd anniversary and hard at work on a new album, ***Twice Told Tales***, a collection of traditional folk songs from the British Isles slated for release in early 2015. The album is their second venture in crowd funding through Pledgemusic.com.

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