

Artist: **Withered Hand**
Title: ***You're Not Alone***
Label: **SL Records/Fence Records**
Release Date: **29th June**
Cat No: **LONE72**
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Last year, Withered Hand's *Religious Songs* EP drew glowing praise from all quarters; it was wry and funny and just a little out of tune. Now comes *You're Not Alone*: the brilliant follow-up, a primer for the forthcoming full-length album (due in September), and the first ever joint release from the East Coast's two most illustrious labels, Fence Records and SL.

Recorded over a weekend in the tiny meeting hall of the Anstruther Improvements Association, the four tracks of this EP boast the unmistakably grubby prints of Kenny Anderson (King Creosote), who recorded and mixed the songs as well as contributing his own trademark flourishes of falsetto vocal, accordion, and various unidentifiable percussive instruments. Anderson, whose previous production credits have included B-sides for M.Craft and Badly Drawn Boy, has lent Dan Willson's songs a textured quality that such lo-fi recordings rarely achieve, and although this EP is a solo effort – stripped of the usual cello, banjo and drums – it's lost nothing of the last record's energy.

The songs featured are all glisteningly new – only barely complete, in fact, when Dan's lyric book blew out of his van door in Anstruther and straight into the harbour, from which he was able to retrieve only a few sodden sheets. Despite this early crisis, the words possess all the clock-stopping impact we have come to expect of his songwriting – full of pathos, and achingly familiar even in their specificity. 'Big Ten Four' represents a tribute to the late Paul Carter, much-loved Edinburgh artist, whose work adorns the cover of the EP: "I still wear your cast-off shirt – I lose a button, man that hurts... We don't need this memorabilia."

'In the world of Withered Hand, music is not just a performance, but a way to communicate with friends as well as a crowd.' (The Skinny, March 2009)

Withered Hand is right at the swirling epicentre of Edinburgh's much-lauded musical renaissance, embodying the collective approach that has characterised recent developments here: the core band features members of Meursault, St Jude's Infirmary and Paul Vickers And The Leg, while other collaborators have included local heroes Jo Foster and Bart-from-Eagleowl, as well as *Golden Hour* poets Ryan Van Winkle and Ericka Duffy. The band has found itself playing to ever more devoted audiences over the past couple of years, sharing stages large and small with like-minded luminaries such as Calvin Johnson, Jeffrey Lewis and Malcolm Middleton.

Dan Willson is irrefutably one of the most talented songwriters at large in Scotland today, and Withered Hand among the most righteous and barnstorming of Edinburgh's irrepressible DIY new guard.

This latest release ought to be cause for massive celebration.