**Luluc**

***Passerby***

**Release Date: July 15th, 2014**

**“The trees that are slow to grow bear the best fruit.” —Molière**

**“The strongest of all warriors are these two — Time and Patience.” —Leo Tolstoy**

**“Said woman, take it slow / and things will be just fine / You and I’ll just use a little patience.” —Axl Rose**

In a world where instant gratification is the norm, patience has become a rare commodity. But for Zoë Randell and Steve Hassett, who make up indie-folk duo Luluc (pronounced Loo-LUKE), letting things unfold in due time not only defines their career trajectory, it also works as a pretty good description of their approach to making music. Music that Sub Pop co-founder Jonathan Poneman describes as "bracing, subtle, tender and magnificent".

So while it may seem like Randell and Hassett’s history is littered with all kinds of good luck—from their initial meeting to their relationship with The National’s Aaron Dessner to their deal with Sub Pop to grabbing the attention of Nick Drake’s producer—being in the right place at the right time isn’t just about fate. It’s about knowing when something feels right and having the confidence that people will respond when they’re ready.

There’s no question that everything these Australians (who split their time between Melbourne and their adopted hometown of Brooklyn) have done in their lives has been leading up to this summer’s *Passerby*, their second album overall and first available worldwide. Co-produced by the band and Dessner, *Passerby* shows off all of Luluc’s best qualities, retaining the gentle beauty of the duo’s debut, *Dear Hamlyn,* while adding extra textures built with the assistance of a cadre of impressive players. It’s the trophy celebrating Luluc’s airtight case that good things—no, make that great things—really do come to those who wait

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**Exhibit A: A number of years passed between the duo’s introduction and their debut album**

The first bit of kismet in Luluc’s story placed a couple of young Australian musicians, fresh off the breakup of their respective bands, halfway around the world in Scotland. Randell arrived first to work at the Edinburgh Festival, and after mentioning to her London cousins that she was in need of a guitar, they hooked her up with a friend who was headed in that direction. Hassett showed up to the Spiegeltent where she worked with a copy of *Huckleberry Finn* in one hand and a guitar in the other. They hit it off right away.

“As soon as we sang together, we looked at each other and went, ‘Holy shit, that sounds really good,’” says Hassett.

“It was just a remarkable blend harmonically,” agrees Randell. “Steve started harmonizing with this idea I was showing him, and the blend was absolutely amazing.”

But as has become standard operating procedure for the duo, they didn’t rush into anything. After returning to Australia, the pair got jobs, continued their studies, and separately played in other bands. But after her father passed away, Randell began reevaluating her life, eventually coming to the conclusion that it was time to focus all of her energy on music. In time, songs started flowing out of her and eventually she and Hassett (who she likes to call her “editor in chief”) recorded 2008’s *Dear Hamlyn*, a tribute to Randell’s dad.

The starkly simple yet dramatically moving work slowly but surely began to make waves in Australia and beyond, thanks in part to opening slots with artists like Lucinda Williams, Fleet Foxes, and José Gonzàlez.

“It was an interesting time, because obviously it’s very hard to lose someone so significant as your father,” says Randell. “But at the same time, I’mpleased that I was able to take that experience and turn it into something very meaningful for me, and that people have responded to the music so positively.”

**Exhibit B: Some of their biggest fans found out about Luluc long after they formed**

Randell and Hassett aren’t the kinds of people who name-drop, but to skip over the notable members of their fanbase is to ignore yet another remarkable part of Luluc’s journey. Because with just a single self-released disc, they’ve made pretty rabid fans of some marquee names, all of whom discovered Luluc years after they released their debut album: People like The National, Nick Drake producer Joe Boyd, and *No Depression* cofounder Peter Blackstock, who not only called *Dear Hamlyn* “the most beautiful record I have heard in 10 years,” but also put the band in contact with Sub Pop cofounder Jonathan Poneman, who just so happened to be in Brooklyn when he got the email. He was immediately won over, arranged a meeting, and signed Luluc.

Though the band had been urged for years by an Australian promoter to reach out to Boyd, as Luluc’s music bears more than just a passing resemblance to Drake’s, they’d been scared off by the assertion in his memoir that he no longer listens to “WPSE’s,” a.k.a. white people singing in English. (“A category we are most definitely in,” laughs Randell.) But she eventually gave in and sent him a copy of *Dear Hamlyn*, and soon after they were contacted by Boyd, who was later quoted as saying, “I played it in my bedroom one night when I was reading and I thought, ‘Oh, that’s nice.’ And I played it again the next night, then I played it again the next night, and finally I was like, ‘Who the hell is this person?’”

Boyd asked Luluc to take part in the Australian edition of his Nick Drake tribute tour, which was just around the corner—oh, what timing!—and last year he released a Record Store Day single of the band’s live version of “Things Behind The Sun.” That track, along with their take on “Fly,” also ended up on the tour’s soundtrack, *Way To Blue: The Songs Of Nick Drake*.

Lucinda Williams is the rare big name to have recognized Luluc’s magic early on, and she invited the fledgling band to stay with her for a while in Los Angeles. But instead of trying to push them forward, it’s like she inherently knew this was a band designed to take one thing at a time.

“She was sort of comparing Zoë with the way she felt when she first started trying to get her music out there, that no one really understood her,” says Hassett. “She was in her own category, and said that people aren’t going to get you straight away. She said words to the effect of, ‘Someone will sign you, but it’ll take time because you’re not in the box.’”

**Exhibit C: After the initial *Passerby* sessions in Australia didn’t feel right, the band decided to start the whole process over again 10,000 miles away**

Of all famous fans, The National have arguably become the most important, thanks to Aaron Dessner’s work on *Passerby*. But, as usual, it was a relationship, and then an album, that needed time to be fleshed out.

After an aborted attempt to make the record in Melbourne, they were introduced by a mutual friend to Dessner, whose garage studio is located in Brooklyn’s Ditmas Park, one of the neighborhoods where Randell and Hassett had lived since first moving to New York in 2010. Though they were still happy writing songs as a duo, for their new album they wanted to open themselves up to new ideas and expand their sonic palette. Duly impressed with Dessner’s résumé, the band asked if he was interested in working on *Passerby*. He gave them the keys to the studio and told them to start while he was out of town.

“We recorded all of my guitar parts and vocals and sent that to Aaron while he was away, and he wrote back and said he could definitely work with us,” says Randell. “And pretty much the email that he wrote to us about how he would produce it was what we would have written to a potential producer, so we were pretty blown away.”

The result of their collaboration is a gorgeously crafted 10-track album full of beautiful, slow-burning melodies and delicate harmonies, which drip out of their mouths like honey. The attention to detail is unmistakable, and highlights like “Reverie On Norfolk Street” and “Early Night” are as haunting as they are hummable. Like *Dear Hamlyn*, unadorned guitars and voices make up the bulk of the dreamy sound, though the power of the added instrumentation can’t be overstated, with well-placed piano, percussion, double bass, sax, trumpet, trombone, and more adding color to the cosmopolitan atmosphere. Band favorites like Simon and Garfunkel and Gillian Welch (and, of course, Nick Drake) can be felt throughout *Passerby*, while the poignant restraint aligns them well with labelmates Low.

Lyrically, traveling and observing the world around her—windows show up on the album a few times—set the scene of *Passerby*, which finds Randell embracing new experiences that further enhance her appreciation of familiar people and places. Some characters in her poetry are real while others are imagined, but all of her emotionally charged words ring true with universal themes of love, longing, and loss. Though it would seem difficult to follow up an album as personal and thematically focused as *Dear Hamlyn*, Randell wasn’t fazed by the challenge. Besides, her dad can still be found all over *Passerby*, both directly—check out “Gold On The Leaves,” “Star,” and the title track—and in spirit.

With their trust in Dessner secured from the outset, Randell and Hassett were comfortable with him flipping through his mental Rolodex to find the right guests to help make the record. He invited members of The National’s touring band as well as guys who have played with Bon Iver, Beirut, and Sufjan Stevens, and Dessner himself contributed heavily to *Passerby*, adding guitar, bass, percussion, piano, synths, and harmonium. In essence, he became the unofficial third member of Luluc, and together they worked diligently to make sure their collective vision became a reality.

“Steve and I have similar intuitive taste,” says Randell. “We work together so confidently and compatibly that it was kind of remarkable how well Aaron was able to fit in. He really felt like part of our creative brain.”

And lest you think this matchup was one and done, the bond was further strengthened when Luluc recently opened a string of dates with The National in Australia and New Zealand. And there’s more: Hassett can be heard singing backup on “Lean,” The National’s entry on the *Hunger Games: Catching Fire* soundtrack.

With the release of *Passerby*, it appears that the stars have aligned for Luluc. They may have taken the long road to get here, but everything Randell and Hassett do ends up feeling perfectly timed.

“None of it seemed particularly slow for us,” says Randell. “We were never going to put the record out until the songs were recorded the way they needed to be. This was about getting the music right and the songs right, and making sure that they’d found their proper voice.”

The wait is over. The world is ready to hear Luluc quiet and clear.