



THE COO
AMSTERDAM MOON



Just Listen
Records

They could easily have spent their whole lives living worlds apart, but the chance encounter between the two songwriters of The Coo feels like it was always meant to be.

Matt Arthur and Jara Holdert's journey started with a serendipitous meeting on a midsummer evening and has evolved into a deep musical and personal relationship bridging the North Sea. They write and sing songs together in two-part harmony about time, love, life and the universe.

Matt Arthur, finding himself somewhat lost and unfulfilled at home, left Britain on a spontaneous trip to Amsterdam, alone, searching for a spiritual and musical break. He took himself to a local open mic event at Amsterdam's café De Koe. That's where Jara Holdert first noticed him, sitting at the other end of the bar. After they heard one another's songs, they knew immediately that they were woven from the same artistic cloth. A conversation started over some jenevers and continued when they met up again the next evening and Jara showed Matt around the canals under a full Amsterdam moon. They talked about music and philosophy and life and heartbreak. And then they had to part, way too soon.

Matt went back to London, and Jara stayed in Amsterdam. Too often, stories end there. And it would have been a beautiful story, even if it was only ever going to be a fleeting one. But when, almost a year later, Jara decided to pay Matt an impromptu visit, they discovered that their musical connection went far deeper than they'd realised. The moment they were in the same room again, something clicked.

Something in the space between them – the space they had reduced from miles and miles to just metres – fell into place.

“The very first day, we went up to Matt’s studio in Tottenham and from the moment I picked up a guitar, we were playing, exploring, adding, and a song flowed out. It surprised both of us,” says Jara.

The next two years were spent writing songs over WhatsApp, meeting over FaceTime and visiting each other — when they could afford it — to play intimate acoustic shows together.

“We discovered that there was this kind of magic between us, musically,” says Matt. “We don’t ever need to discuss things too much. We could start and end songs on stage whenever we liked, or we could change melodies and arrangements and we knew that we would follow each other”.

Jara: “Our days together were always limited, so we never had much time to rehearse. But we discovered that it didn’t matter when we played impromptu concerts – we trusted each other musically, and because we took songs on stage right after we’d written something, the material stayed fresh and the performance adventurous. We both had experience with studio projects and band projects where tracks were perfected to a tee and rehearsed for hours, but that’s not what we were about. Our playing together felt more free, spontaneous, a breath of relief. We thought part of our magic was in that – and that the live-feel of our material is what we should try to capture if we’d ever record.

In April 2019, the time was ripe – the Coo was ready to capture their sound as it was created, as it evolved, and as it had always been heard — in a live environment.

Which is how we arrive at the latest chapter in The Coo story — their debut EP, called Amsterdam Moon, which was recorded in front of a live audience in the Uilenberger Sjoel, Amsterdam in April 2019 in conjunction with Just Listen Records and Native DSD.

The old synagogue, with its natural reverb, was turned into a concert hall, with chairs in a circle around the two performers, who were set in the middle, facing each other. The Coo played two concerts on the same night and each set they played for a different audience; the first set with late daylight still flowing into the high windows, the second set at dusk, with the audience somehow almost magically doubled. All the songs of the EP were taken from either the first or the second concert – you can hear the tension, the chairs creaking in the background, people holding their breath.

Matt: “Recording the concert live was amazing because Jara and I have a chemistry on stage and when we sing together that gets heightened when an audience is present. Also, one of the things about modern recording is that you can re-run things as many times as you like and edit together composite versions of takes – but we didn’t want to do that on this EP. We wanted to capture what we are about, who we are and our sound, without editing and without the ability to think about things too much.”

Jara: “We wanted some drums and bass guitar on a few of the songs, but we hadn’t actually really attempted this until the week of the recording itself, which is another example of the spontaneous nature of our collaboration. We were very lucky to have found two absolute pros in Sean Gascoigne (drums) and Bram Van Langen (bass) – they picked the songs up so quickly and always played so tastefully. The pressure was probably greater on them when it came to the recording because it’s one thing messing up your own songs, but quite another messing someone else’s up! They were fantastic.”

Jara: “We were really very grateful to all the people who came along, because it wasn’t like a normal gig – the audience could probably hardly hear anything at times because there was no amplification, and what they could hear would have been very ambient-sounding. They were so patient and supportive!”

It was a real pleasure to work with Native DSD and Just Listen Records, they achieved such a beautiful sound and hosted such a beautiful evening. We are eternally grateful for the opportunity and for the experience. Thank you for investing in our music – we hope you enjoy it!

— **The Coo**



Jara Holdert - studied jazz vocals at The Royal Conservatory in The Hague before switching direction radically in her own compositions, which were inspired more by the folk and pop music of the late sixties and seventies, played in open tunings. Singing her own songs in different bands as the front woman, touring and releasing her first EP 'Sky Collector' in 2015, Jara finally settled on the project-name 'Lewin' for her newer material. A debut album full of her own compositions - set firmly in a warm seventies-inspired band-sound with more acoustic moments, while also showing a definite affinity for the freedom of jazz; its phrasings, rhythmical variations and chords, will come out in 2020.

Matt Arthur - Matt has been writing and recording his own songs for over fifteen years. Based in London, UK he has been a regular fixture on the acoustic and indie live circuits in the South East of England and has been involved in a number of different projects. His most recent work outside of The Coo has been 'The Arthur Brothers' - a musical collaboration with his brother Danny Arthur and long term friend and producer JC Wright. The project started in a studio in Tottenham, North East London and has since released three singles on the label 'ClearLight Records' in partnership and under licence to 'Declared Goods'. Their debut album is due for release later this year. When Matt is not working on The Coo or The Arthur Brothers he is developing new songs in his home studio using a mixture of modern digital and analogue tape techniques. He hopes that this will see the light of day some time soon.

THE COO AMSTERDAM MOON

LOW COUNTRY GIRL
SOMETHING'S TURNED
IF ONLY
ABOUT TIME
ROSIE
BABY WON'T YOU PLEASE



All songs sung and played by The Coo: Matt Arthur (electric and acoustic guitar) and Jara Holdert (acoustic guitar and ukulele). Thanks to Bram van Langen for his lovely bass and Sean Gascoigne for his tight drumming, also on the tracks that didn't make it on the record. Thanks to Jonas Sacks and Sjoerd Vriesema for organising different parts of this journey, Jonas for taking amazing footage and Jared Sacks for recording. Thanks to Bastiaan Kuijt for his patience and his mastering, Jan-Jaap Poot for his beautiful artwork ... and finally everyone who came along and supported the recordings. Love, The Coo

Music and Lyrics by The Coo: Matt Arthur & Jara Holdert. www.thecoomusic.com
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