

HIP Video Promo presents: Philosopher Pirate premieres "Raven" music video on Music-News.com

Folk-rocker Philosopher Pirate is making waves in the NJ underground. The "Raven" video (directed by Courtney Collins [NLK Studio]) is strange and engrossing.

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Joni Mitchell sang about one; Andrew Wyeth painted one; Edgar Allen Poe quoted one. There's a very good reason corvids continue to inspire artists of all kinds: they're highly intelligent animals and always seem to know things that we don't. Ravens are messengers of the sky, bearers of mystery, and portents of things that might be. Add Mike Kuzan of Philosopher Pirate to the list of writers who've been inspired by the big black birds of legend — and who may just have gotten a transmission from the far side of the clouds.

If a blackbird had something to deliver to a human being, Kuzan is an obvious recipient. The Asbury Park-based folk-rocker has become recognized in the Garden State underground for his listening skills. The Latest Noise, his event production, promotions, and recording collective, has shone the spotlight on the iconoclastic and unfashionably literary. He has introduced his rapidly growing audience to independent sounds and, in the process, made himself a pillar of the scene. His own music reflects those values: it's unpretentiously smart, subtly theatrical, tuneful, and sharply written; indebted to Dylan, Waits, and Springsteen, but profoundly original, too.

"Raven," the latest Philosopher Pirate single, is quintessential Kuzan. Every instrument on the track is impeccably played and beautifully recorded. Drums pound; guitars roar. The arrangement promises intrigue, warning, and departures from expectation. But the craft, impressive as it is, is there to serve the storytelling and provide a setting for the Philosopher Pirate's compelling, idiosyncratic performance. Kuzan radiates an offbeat personality with every

syllable. He's a born romantic, a true searcher, and a natural target for a harbinger on wings.

The crisply shot clip for "Raven" is similarly strange, engrossing, and dramatic. Director Courtney Collins (NLK Studio) raises the curtain on a small but surreal performance space — one hung with drapes, crowned with cardboard clouds, and decorated with toy cactuses. Guitar slung across his back, the Philosopher Pirate stalks this artificial world, turning his antique spyglass on the landscape and answering a papier-mache telephone. In one shot, his silhouette is surrounded by the shadows of a flock of birds; in another, he's joined by a quartet of dancers in feathered shirts and crow masks. Their choreographed sequence is at once playful and spooky: they, too, have been possessed by the spirit of the raven. It's thrilling and haunting; it's a journey into a terrifying, delightful unknown.

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