

Thurston Moore



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Thurston Moore is a very busy man. A founding member of Sonic Youth, one of the most engaging bands ever to grace the alternative rock scene, Thurston also releases a solo record this autumn. *Trees Outside The Academy* has been gaining interest from hardcore fans and newcomers alike. Born in 1958 in Coral Gables, Florida, Thurston grew up in Connecticut. He formed Sonic Youth with his now wife, Kim Gordon, in 1981. The band was associated with the No Wave art and music scene in 1980s New York, making use of unusual guitar tunings and feedback. They have outlasted most other bands from the scene, releasing many albums and widening their appeal with involvement in art and literature. Thurston's second solo outing following 1995's *Psychic Hearts*, *Trees Outside The Academy* has a mellower sound than both its predecessor and many Sonic Youth records, being mainly acoustic and lyric-driven. "The songs had been developing over the last year. Usually we move the songs to electric guitar and the band turns them into Sonic Youth songs, but I was very adamant about keeping them in the acoustic realm."

Thurston is a talented lyricist and with this album decided to eschew the writing style he used on albums like Sonic Youth's *Here Come The Warm Jets*, which uses lots of non-sequiturs, in favour of a more accessible approach. "I write words that are sort of punk

surreal, but I want them to be evocative to anybody who listens to them too. I like to write in an intuitive way and for the lyrics to happen while I'm writing the song." The album's title is also rather evocative: "I had this image of a university with tall green trees planted in front. I had an image of someone staring out at all these trees reflecting on the ideas of intellect and nature."

Thurston enjoys the band dynamic but wanted to do a solo record, which was a matter of finding the time. "It allowed me to do something without too much democratic dialogue. I could make all the decisions for myself." He didn't completely go it alone though, making use of various music industry friends. The songs were recorded in J Mascis' (of Dinosaur Jr) home studio in Amherst, Massachusetts. Thurston managed to enlist several impressive guests to help him out, including Mascis himself and Charalambides' Christina Carter. Thurston had previously worked with co-producer John Agnello on the last Sonic Youth album, *Rather Ripped*. "I met John when he was working with J, who highly recommended him. He was very constructive and very positive. There was no question when I was doing the solo album that I wanted to work with him."

Despite having been in the public eye for over 25 years, Thurston does not regard himself as a rock star. "We came out of a scene where the idea of being a rock star

was embarrassing. There is this kind of lo-fi that enters the mainstream and Sonic Youth has been around long enough for that to happen." He watched the recent documentary on The Clash front man, *Joe Strummer: The Future is Unwritten*. "They had that moment when they could sell out an arena in America. There were interviews with kids outside who knew nothing about where they came from. I would like it if people reacted to us in that instantaneous way. It's not necessary for people to know your whole story."

Thurston is doing his bit for independent music with his record label, *Ecstatic Peace*, founded in 1981. "I have this Magik Markers record coming out and one by MV & EE. Our label's getting a lot of recognition." Thurston is also involved in editing poetry journals and has a pictorial essay book coming out. Sonic Youth will start work on a new record in November after touring their re-released 1988 album, *Daydream Nation*, and Thurston will also tour the solo record. He is clearly very busy, and does occasionally question his many time-consuming involvements: "Sometimes I think I want to go and live in a monastery or something... I had this idea to do a solo record because I had a window of about two weeks this springtime." Lucky for us he found the time.

Alexis Somerville