

Seth Augustus *To the Pouring Rain*

Porto Franco Records

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Artist page: sethaugustus.com

Images, videos, press kit: portofrancorecords.com/artist/106/

After haunting the outer-lands of San Francisco's music world for the better part of two decades, **Seth Augustus** has emerged, full-born, with a fully realized sound and perspective that seems to exist outside of time and the limits of geography. Coarse and primitive textures, pre-war blues, hypnagogic tales told over tangos by midnight buskers, Seth's own sinister-electrified guitar and a stripped down drum kit mingle with the rhythms of early American folk and jazz, the cadences of carnival sounds and more than a little 60s-era Captain Beefheart. And that voice, gravel rough yet melodic, capable of intricate subtleties, tonalities and harmonics, as if risen from some horse-trading minstrel wandering on the Tuvan Steppe. Perhaps the music of Seth Augustus was not meant to be recorded, but played into the night under giant tents, to congregations of the afflicted and those yearning for deliverance. Perhaps a pack of mules should be listening in from the outside. But for now, everyone will have to settle for his debut CD, *To the Pouring Rain*.

Augustus paid his early dues in the venerable art-punk and experimental music world of 1980s Boston where he picked up a still-healthy ethic of DIY self-reliance. He migrated to San Francisco in the late eighties, where he befriended the elusive guitar wizard Helios Creed, who became a significant musical and recording influence on **Augustus**. Creed's approach favors intuition over intellect, and an anything-goes musical inclusiveness that literally opens up a world of possibilities.

In the late 1990s, after a six-year hiatus from music, fortune led **Augustus** to make the most important connection of his creative life. He befriended **Paul Pena**, the great blind blues-man who penned 'Big Old Jet Airliner' and was the subject of an Oscar-nominated documentary, *Genghis Blues*. Seth became his student, and eventually his road manager, occasional collaborator and, when Pena took ill, his caretaker until the end of his life in 2005. The time in Paul Pena's company was transformative for **Seth Augustus**. It was Pena's encouragement, his advice, his perspective; it was traveling to Tuva and studying throat singing there, it was learning blues with Pena, learning the blues as something that emanates from inside; it was traveling through Mali and being deeply moved by the musicians there, it was meeting and collaborating with San Francisco musical stalwarts like **Jolie Holland**; in short, it was the entire thing, this comprehensive re-immersion into music, facilitated by Paul Pena, that propelled **Augustus** into the fertile zone he currently inhabits.

In 2007 a group of musicians in Rennes, France, operating under the name **Naxoprod**, discovered **Augustus'** music on-line, invited him to Europe and set up three tours for him. The music was so well received by the European audiences that **Augustus** came back to the States with a new sense of confidence and determination.

Augustus' debut, *To the Pouring Rain*, was done mostly in-house - he recorded and mixed it and played most of the instruments on it - to distribute on his first tour of Europe in 2007. It was laid down quickly, without much time for revision: it's unmistakably the record of a blues-man, definitely the record of a throat-singer, undeniably touched by Beefheart and Waits and Howlin' Wolf. But even the great mojo master Howlin' Wolf never played the Igil (Tuvan fiddle) or Doshpuluur (Tuvan banjo). As **Augustus** works on his new record, this time with a regular lineup of collaborators, **Porto Franco Records** sees fit to reissue his strikingly impressive debut, *To the Pouring Rain*.

Perhaps **Seth Augustus'** complex and ever evolving credo could be framed with a line from 'Slim Sam:' "Trying to be subtle without being sarcastic."