

How 'The Still Tide' found home on Denver's dry land



BAND BIOGRAPHY BY JOHN MOORE

Anna Morsett spent most of her life on the coasts, but it wasn't until she moved to landlocked Colorado in 2013 that the guitar-wielding songwriter discovered The Still Tide: Both her band, and the calm current she had been seeking in her own life.

"I came here from the coast, noise and city tangled in my head," she sings on the first single from The Still Tide's fourth EP. "Found you like forgiveness, swept clean by years of mountain air."

Morsett is now firmly entrenched in the Colorado music community, having played with These United States, Ark Life, Porlolo, Brent Cowles and Natalie Tate. But she very much remains the undulating wave of The Still Tide, a seductive, shoegazey collective that marks a shifting tide with *Each, After*. The new EP is essentially Morsett's solo debut, while still fully supported by guitarist and co-founder Jacob Miller and a rotating ensemble that currently consists of drummer Joe Richmond (Churchill, Tennis) and bassist Nate Meese (Meese, The Centennial).

"I always wanted the full band sound, Morsett said. "But I also wanted the freedom and the anonymity to kind of cruise around on my own."

Morsett is as enigmatic as her sound is alluring. She describes herself as both a shredder guitar chick and a nerdy loner. A frontwoman and an anonymous face in the crowd. She is seemingly always in transition, like a wave shapeshifting between low and high tide.

Morsett grew up in Olympia, Wash., under a sister-infused musical foundation that included Pearl Jam, Nirvana, Jimi Hendrix and Andy Aledort's guitar lesson books. She dove head-first into the headwaters of New York and came up for air five years later, almost by accident, in Denver. That's where she created The Still Tide, which was soon named 303 Magazine's best up-and-coming local artist.

But with Each, After, Morsett is stepping up to the mic and fully claiming The Still Tide as her own. "I think I was hiding behind the band, for whatever reason," she said. "But now, I'm ready."

In its previous incarnation, The Still Tide was called Yet Cut Breath, a delicious morsel for theatre geeks who may recognize the phrase from Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. It's about a man who draws breath from a woman he believes to be a statue. It's a celebration of any artist who manages to bring life from any kind of metaphorical stone.

But when Morsett moved to Denver, it was time to cut bait from Yet Cut Breath, for two reasons: There are only so many Shakespeare nerds in the music community, and Morsett grew "awearry," as The Bard might say, of explaining the meaning. But more so because The Still Tide was a more fitting way to describe an unlikely singer who prefers to perform in the protective bosom of a collective. Morsett is both first and last. A poet and a literalist.

Morsett describes herself as human slackwater — that's the exact moment when you are not quite sure if the tide is coming in or moving out.

"I think I've been trying to seek stillness for so long," she said. "I was at this point where I felt like everything was falling off the table and you keep trying to catch things — but you can never catch them fast enough."

Which is another way of saying: You can't please everyone. So she stopped the world. And before things change again, Morsett is intent on enjoying what she is calling "a beautiful pause" that started with her move to Denver in 2013.

Within a year, Miller joined Morsett in Denver after a breakup of his own in New York. Morsett said it was being booked into the 2014 Denver Post Underground Music Showcase in her first year here that turned the tide for the evolution of her band. "We thought it was such a big deal that we got into the UMS," she said. "And that was great entrance to Denver for Jake, too. He was so enchanted by the whole thing that he moved here a few months later."

Morsett calls dropping into a very welcoming Denver music community as akin to "plopping down under the wings and grace of these beautiful people," she said. "They were like, 'Hey, this kid's all right. She can shred.' "

And within a few months, even she was shocked to realize that she had made a home here in Denver.

"I think in my mind, I was always going to move to the West Coast and back to family," she said. "I thought this was a pit stop. But then I thought, 'No, there's something really special here. I need to explore this for however long it lasts.' "

It will last at least through *Each, After*. She calls the E.P., with its carefully placed comma and chill vibe, as "a sweet landing spot for these beautiful open guitar riffs that didn't really fit the vibe of the last record," she said. "I love the power of having that full band experience, but I also love the immediacy and intimacy of these tender little things. I'm trying to figure out how both of those vibes can fit in the same world."

Morsett tantalizingly describes the new E.P. as four true ruminations on past personal and artistic breakups. Tantalizing, because the fourth song is a reflection on a woman she hasn't even met yet.

She wrote the first song five years ago about someone she was falling in love with at the time. "It was so vulnerable that I tucked it away for years and I would only play it privately," she said. "But then I changed the riff a little bit and I started to fall in love with the song all again, and now it's one of my favorites. But it took five years for me to get there." Another song is about a past songwriting collaborator. Each is a soft, reflective way, she said, of putting those past relationships to bed.

And then there is the fourth song.

"That last one, I guess, is for the next person, who I don't know yet," she said. "It's the hope for someone, I guess."

When the time comes for her still tide to rise again.