

THE ACCIDENTALS

The most unbelievable journeys often start in the most unexpected of places.



Long before glowing acclaim from NPR and Billboard, packed shows, unforgettable festival appearances, millions of streams, and collaborations with everyone from BTS to Contemporary Youth Orchestra, the journey of The Accidentals commenced in a public high school classroom in Traverse City, MI. As the story goes, concertmaster violinist Savannah Buist, and cellist, Katie Larson, raised their hands at the request for volunteers to play a music boosters concert and wound up being musical soulmates.

After Sav and Katie attended a school presentation by The Moxie Strings, their collective fate would be sealed forever. “If the Moxie Strings hadn’t come to our school, we might not have pursued music professionally,” admits Sav. “We didn’t see many other girls playing popular music on violin and cello in sustainable careers. We didn’t even know that career path existed until those two women walked through the door. That’s when we realized it was possible.”

“We live and breathe music,” adds Katie. “Music helped me survive those awkward middle school years when I wasn’t sure where to identify myself. It’s helped us figure out who we are, given us confidence, allowed us to travel the world, and completely opened up our minds.”

The Accidentals now host and lead workshops across the country, hoping to inspire other young musicians. They opened a nonprofit in 2020 called Play It Forward, Again and Again, to help provide access to instruments, lessons, and mentors for all aspiring musicians. As advocates for youth music and youth empowerment, they focused extensively on “getting out the young vote” in the 2020 election. They donated over twenty live streams to raise money for causes including the #iVoted festival, Headcount, Rock the Vote, Arts Quest youth programming, Michigan Music Alliance, Musicians Treatment Foundation, Sweet Relief, MusiCares, Lighthouse Shelter Detroit, Headstart, TREES, Concert for Hunger Chicago, NIVA, and more, while delivering their new single, “How Many Hands” to the 2020 compilation U.S.P.S. – United Songwriters for the People’s Sovereignty. “We’re just paying it forward,”

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says Sav. “We have an incredible support system and core base of music family that help afford us the opportunity to give back.”

The band’s “core supporters” are what they refer to as “The FAMgrove.” Derived from the song “Mangrove” off their Bittersweet album, The Accidentals’ FAMgrove community began in 2012 as a Facebook group and is now an interactive, personalized, Fanclub on Patreon, where the band houses their podcast “Bucketseat Chronicles,” an extensive Tour Blog, New Music Friday, Trivia Nights, Book Club, Throwback Album Deep Dives, Traditions club, a yearly “reunion party” for the Fam, and more. Core Famgrove members Dan and Jan Kautman remember when The Accidentals’ Tangled Red and Blue album first released in 2012, “the songs were catchy and incredibly deep for such young writers.” Having built a devout fan base right out of the gate,

Sav and Katie transferred to Interlochen Arts Academy for the remainder of high school and completed a successful crowdfunding campaign to release Bittersweet only a year later. Shortly after, they met Michael Dause at Blissfest and welcomed him behind the kit as their full-time percussionist, cementing the lineup.

As high school ended, the band began nonstop touring, playing 200+ shows a year at such festivals as Electric Forest, Rocky Mountain Folk Fest, Summerfest, and SXSW, and on stages with the likes of Brandi Carlile, The Wailers, Joan Baez, Arlo Guthrie, Andrew Bird, Martin Sexton, Rusted Root, The Decemberists, and more.

Following the 2016 release of Parking Lot EP, Huffington Post touted The Accidentals among its “Sweet 16 of 2016.” Billboard called them “the band to watch.”

On its heels, they signed a deal with Sony Masterworks label, and 2017’s Odyssey rapidly accelerated the momentum. The 13-track trip boasted collaborations with Kaki King, Jenny Conlee of The Decemberists, Lily & Madeleine, and jam-band guitar virtuoso Keller Williams, whom the band later paired up with to form the Keller Williams Accident at Millennial Music Conference in 2019. Garnering praise from Yahoo! Music, Pop Matters, Billboard, and more, NPR claimed, “[The Accidentals] are some of the most compelling songwriters of our time...they display equal interest in the focused musical forms of indie rock and pop and the expansive potential of orchestral arrangements, jam band open-endedness, and impressionistic singer-songwriter expression.”

Jumping to the big screen, the band scored the indie documentary One Simple Question and wrote “Marrow” for the award-winning movie, Almost Home. “Michigan and Again” showed up on an episode of The Boys on Amazon Prime Video, and “Chekhov’s Gun” is the soundtrack for a Turner Classic Movies reel. RAM released a documentary with the band to promote their #Bandvan series, bringing viewers behind the SXSW and Folk Alliance scenes to show what it’s like to be “in the van” with the band.

In 2018, The Accidentals began work on their fourth full-length album. The three-piece reached out to “two of our dream producers of all-time,” namely John Congleton [St. Vincent, Lana Del Rey] and Tucker Martine [The Decemberists, Neko Case]—and both obliged. Sessions with Congleton happened in L.A.

Before heading to Portland to work with Martine, the bandmates experienced the rougher side of the road.

“Our gear trailer and everything in it was stolen in the middle of the night, in Tucson, Arizona,” sighs Katie. “... “it was devastating.” Two days later, as their audience raised \$40,000 to make up for the loss and the band soldiered on to open for Gabriel Kahane at the MIM, back up Gina Chavez and represent Fender, Shure, LR Baggs, Takamine, SKB Cases, NS Design, D’Addario and Roland Boss at NAMM in CA.

The same perseverance propelled The Accidentals to pivot when the Global Pandemic hit. With help from those same sponsors, the trio transformed the attic of their shared house in Traverse City, MI,

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into a state-of-the-art recording studio known as “Atticus Blue” - named by their FAMgrove members on Patreon. There, the band hunkered down to bring their fourth album recording to completion: Vessel.

Grabbing the reins as co-producers, the music on Vessel takes shape as a natural evolution for The Accidentals. Underpinned and upheld by the orchestral score, the band tightly embraces their folk-pop and Americana influences more than ever before with a common thread of their signature strings and “ethereal harmonies.” Not to mention, Katie and Sav both switch off not only strings and vocals, but also acoustic and electric guitar, bass, and mandolin on the forthcoming Vessel, currently slated to release in fall 2021.

“We’ve been super influenced by the artists we’ve toured with, and we’re really streamlining what our sound is now,” explains Sav. “During the Lockdown, we focused on the songs, the songwriting, and really had time to consider the production. It feels like there’s a cohesiveness and a clear narrative to the album as a result.”

During the Covid-19 quarantine, Sav wrote a manual on using OBS and Streamyard software for live streaming that garnered industry attention, including Recording Academy and Folk Alliance panels, Patreon, Bandsintown, and Hypebot articles. While she was helping other artists/venues with their live streaming, Sav met Kim Richey. That happenstance meeting would lead to Richey co-writing the first single off of the Accidentals brand new TIME OUT EP. TIME OUT was written during quarantine over Zoom with legendary writers like Tom Paxton, Kim Richey, Dar Williams, Maia Sharp, Mary Gauthier, and Jaimee Harris. It usurped the Vessel album to release in May 2021. That savvy tech knowledge, access to a studio in a pandemic, and their reputation for scoring strings quickly established Sav and Katie as the go-to string team for other artists’ albums. They have written and performed string parts on eleven albums, including Keller Williams’ “Hate, Greed, Love” and a remix of “Euphoria” by K-Pop juggernaut and global superstars BTS.

“We’ve had so many amazing memories,” says Michael. “We’ve made so many incredible friendships too. They’ve all been a part of the journey with us.”

With Vessel and more surprises on the horizon, the journey of The Accidentals has only just begun.

“The goal of our music has always been shared experiences. Music helps us process things that are hard to process,” Sav leaves off. “A lot of the writing comes from touring, and touring is just a myriad of extremes, triumphs, and failures. It’s how we connect with people in those moments that shape our experiences. Hopefully, people can relate to something we’re creating in a way that feels like understanding. Maybe, it offers a different perspective, and that leads to less loneliness and more community.”

