



ABRAHAM ALÁIN SCHECHTER / PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST
WAITING GAME: Kurt Baker, second from right, and the Kurt Baker Combo are eager to play together again when the pandemic ends.

Ready for the 'After Party'

Music carried power pop pro Kurt Baker through Madrid lockdown

Kurt Baker spent a lot of 2020 indoors. OK, we all did. But Baker, a power pop maestro from Portland, Maine, has called Madrid his home for the last half decade. When the pandemic hit the Spanish capital, the singer-songwriter observed the country's more restrictive, more effective safety measures.

"We were put into one of the strictest lockdowns in the world," Baker said. "When I would go out to grab some groceries, the cops would often stop me to ask me what I was doing out."

Thankfully, Baker had just wrapped the main sessions for new album, "After Party." Baker's latest collection of rock 'n' roll nuggets — which continues his long relationship with Little Steven's Wicked Cool label



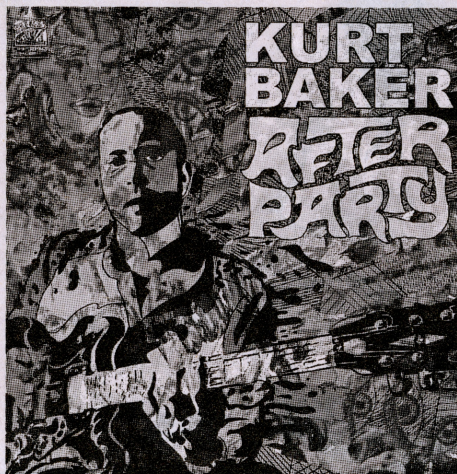
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(Van Zant himself gave his blessing to the mixes on "After Party") — checks some wonderfully familiar boxes. It recalls early Cheap Trick, the Jam and Nick Lowe. More importantly for Baker, it kept him focused while cooped up.

"During the lockdown I finished some parts, recording at my flat, which is really small," he said with a laugh. "Producer Wyatt (Funderburk) would send me daily mixes of the songs. Honestly, that was the thing that kept me positive and gave me some light in such a crazy time."

Over the past few years,



Baker has focused on backing band — he fell right recording with his Spanish into Madrid's power pop,

punk and pub rock scene after doing an acoustic tour of the country in 2014. But for "After Party," he reunited with many of his old Portland buddies, including Funderburk, guitarist Geoff Palmer and bassist Kris Rodgers. Writing with Funderburk in Maine last summer, Baker came up with a set of songs that play out like a long, wild night on the town, complete with lounge numbers and retro rave ups.

"We wanted it to sound like our old life together," Baker said with a laugh. "Which is basically hanging out and partying together. We reference a bar called Amigos and put in a lot of talking bits around the tracks. We were just trying to replicate this feeling we have when we're out in Portland."

Ah, bars, those days seem

so far off. Like so many, Baker is waiting for the pandemic to subside before he hits the clubs. He wouldn't mind some partying, but — as a musician who depends on spreading good cheer and the gospel of rock on tour — he really wants to just get back to work. Over 2020, he finished a record, practiced guitar for hundreds of hours, wrote a whole fresh batch of songs, but nothing can replace the stage.

"When it's possible, we have to get back on the road," he said. "And I really want the guys who played on this record to come over to Spain again because we started out together touring Europe and it's been years since they have come over to play. I know people in Spain really want to see guys like Wyatt, Geoff Palmer and Kris back on stage with me."