

‘Needle on the Rim’

The Future Noir Sessions

‘25th Century Crooner’ Robert Marleigh
on the Making of *Needle on the Rim*
The Shared Frequency Initiative, Vol. 1
robertmarleigh.com | March 2026

Robert Marleigh is a US-UK vocal artist, jazz crooner, and producer based between Indochina and the United States. His debut EP *Needle on the Rim*, the inaugural volume of The Shared Frequency Initiative, arrives on all platforms March 27, 2026.

Recorded remotely across five countries with an international ensemble spanning Cambodia, Thailand, the US, and Italy, the record blends classic Great American Songbook standards with a cinematic aesthetic straddling mid-century Indochina noir and cyber-noir futurism. Here, Robert Marleigh talks about the making of the EP, the philosophy behind the Initiative, and what ‘Future Noir jazz’ actually sounds like.



Robert Marleigh's *Needle on the Rim* Jazz EP album cover art; Release March 27, 2026

What is the significance of ‘Needle on the Rim’ – and how does it differ from a standard jazz release?

‘Needle on the Rim’ refers to that moment when the needle first hits the outer, empty rim of a record and everything goes quiet before the music hits. It’s the threshold between sound and silence. Between the known and the unknown. That’s also the title of the closing spoken-word track on the EP, which is a noir-tinged monologue over a mash-up of all previous tracks on the record: imagine Raymond Chandler and William Burroughs sharing a drink in an old dim Saigon hotel.

As for how it differs from a standard jazz release – this isn’t a standards album in the traditional sense, even though we have three Great American Songbook covers on it. *Needle on the Rim* is a cinematic jazz EP built with a Future Noir aesthetic. That means the production design, the sonic palette, the entire atmosphere owes as much to rain-slicked neon-lit Indochine imagery as it does to the American jazz tradition. I trained in New York, but this record was made in Phnom Penh, Bangkok, New Orleans, and northern Italy – simultaneously, across borders, via the Shared Frequency Initiative. That’s a very different animal.

What does the term ‘Future Noir’ mean sonically?

Future Noir is a cinematic and literary concept...think *Blade Runner* meets the Mekong delta, think Raymond Chandler’s gumshoe Los Angeles transposed to an Indochine metropolis or rural province. Sonically, it means we’re grounding ourselves in classic vocal jazz forms, the velvet-toned baritone, the swing phrasing, the real acoustic instrumentation, but the production wraps that in something more atmospheric.

In *Needle on the Rim*, Rudy Fantin’s Hammond organ textures feel almost liturgical. Philippe Javelle’s clarinet lines have this sinuous, after-midnight quality. Gaby Courroux builds guitar architecture that anchors the whole ensemble. Krit Muangyoo’s percussion from Bangkok gives it a pulse that’s both precise and loose at the same time. Leo Salazar’s flute drifts in like smoke: you don’t always notice it consciously, but it shapes everything around it. And then Ravee Treesaksesakoon’s trumpet cuts through all of it like a searchlight through fog.

It’s jazz, but it’s jazz imagined from the vantage point of a city like Phnom Penh, Cambodia where I have been based for the bulk of production. It’s a place where the past and the future overlap constantly, like the ‘Interzone’ of Burroughs’ *Naked Lunch*.

Music functions best when it ignores the map. Whether it’s a track sent across a border or a session assembled across time zones, the goal is finding the right soul for the sound. – *Robert Marleigh*

NYC vocal training and the atmosphere of Indochina shape this sound

New York gave me the foundation. I actually first went to film school, graduated from NYU thanks to a couple scholarships. There I was involved in acting as part of the film program, which involved an understanding of presence, vocal techniques and so forth. Then went on to perform on Off-Off-Broadway, in indie films, and I did a lot of voiceover and narration for audiobooks and so forth. The light baritone, the technique, the phrasing, the understanding of the Great American Songbook came later and is still evolving to this day.

I've been based in the Indochina region (SE Asia) for the past two decades, much of that time in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. So this is where the heart and texture for *Needle on the Rim* comes from, even if it isn't obviously 'Asian' per se. Yet, if you were to walk the streets of Phnom Penh at night, you'd encounter plenty of the shadowy, neo-noir experiences I'm talking about here. The sensory overlap here is constant. When you live there long enough, it rewires your sense of what music can sound like. The street vendors, the countryside funerals, the mix of languages...it all seeps in.

So when I sing 'Angel Eyes' or 'Pennies from Heaven,' I'm bringing those standards into an 'Indochina of the Mind'. The Future Noir aesthetic is just an honest expression of that collision.

What is The Shared Frequency Initiative?

The Shared Frequency Initiative is a Camerado Media production framework designed to facilitate creative collaboration across geopolitical divides. That's the formal description. The human version is: it's a way to make records, films, interactive media, music, and educational content with people who can't physically be in the same room because of border closures, conflict, diplomatic friction, or even simple logistics.

For *Needle on the Rim*, we had contributors in five countries. The Thailand-Cambodia border situation in 2025–2026 meant that musicians on either side of that line couldn't easily cross. So Camerado built a digital bridge, by way of remote production workflows, distributed sessions, and an asynchronous collaboration workflow. The music doesn't care about border politics.

Technology has always shaped music; in the vocal world, it was the development of sensitive studio ribbon mics that allowed the dynamic, sensitive 'crooner' type of delivery to be possible. The invention of tape effects and later digital effects pedals and loop pedals, opened up whole new vistas. Of course, the music at the heart of it has to be real – has to have a heart. Without that, no amount of technical augmentation, whether in learning, performance, or post-production will fill the gap.

Speaking of which, music functions best when it ignores the map. Whether it's a track sent across a border or a session assembled across time zones, the goal is finding the right soul for the sound. SFI is the infrastructure that makes that possible.

What was the remote recording and production process like? How do you build a jazz collaboration across New Orleans, Bangkok, Phnom Penh, and Italy?

It starts with the arrangement. I'll lay down the vocal and a rough structure, then send reference tracks and direction to the players. Gaby Courroux, a French émigré based in Cambodia, played guitar backing and solo sections. Krit Muangyoo laid down some smoking percussion from Bangkok. Leo Salazar sent his flute parts from Siem Reap, Cambodia, Phil Javelle from Phnom Penh. Ravee Treesaksesakoon, who's Thai diaspora based in New Orleans, added his trumpet from 10,000 miles away. And finally, I recorded all the vocals in my treated vocal booth at my flat in Phnom Penh.

Stems and takes are usually sent by Google drive, we transfer, Dropbox and other platforms. Live collaboration can be done too, though latency needs to be overcome with dedicated hardware and software controllers on both sides. Final mixing and mastering happens under the Camerado label.

'Bad Guys' is an original. You've mentioned using AI-augmented frameworking in the composition. Can you explain that?

'Bad Guys' started life as an original alt-rock track, released in 2018 as 'Bad Guys' under my previous alt-rock persona Gone Marshall. I wanted to reimagine the same song as a big-band swing powerhouse for the Robert Marleigh brand, but the arrangement architecture for something that complex is enormous. In the end, that track was completed as a hybrid of real horns, sampled horns, organic percussion, AI horn beds, sampled percussion, augmented percussion, and of course, real vocals to build out that original composition. Chromatically, aside from the intro and the beat, it's the same as the original.

Talking about some specific tracks. 'Black Hole Sun' is a Soundgarden song...what's a grunge classic doing on a jazz EP?

Well, *Black Hole Sun* has been covered before many times, including in the jazz area by Postmodern Jukebox. But on 'Needle on the Rim', 'Black Hole Sun' is reimaged as a 1920s-style, crackly old speakeasy arrangement on a wobbly, warped 78 rpm record. When you strip away the distortion and the Chris Cornell vocal attack, that song has this almost cabaret-quality harmonic structure. It was begging to be sung in the style of a nasally, pre-ribbon mic crooner from the 20s or early 30s. That's part of the 'time machine' cinematic crossover quality of the record.

The EP also includes a spoken-word title track. What's the story there?

The closing track, 'Needle on the Rim,' is a spoken-word performance set over a musical mashup of all the other tracks on the record. It's the most overtly 'noir' piece on the EP, written in the tradition of Burroughs and Chandler. It's something like a 1940s gumshoe stalking the streets of 25th century Saigon or Vientiane, talking to himself about a phantasmagoric case that's been hovering in his mind for decades. The needle hits the rim, we hear the main songs, then the music fades, and you're left with a voice and a

story at the end. The song, ‘Needle on the Rim’ at the end of the record, *Needle on the Rim*, is when the needle hits the label on the record, and it’s all over.

You’re described as ‘The 25th Century Crooner.’ Where does that come from?

It’s a nod to the Future Noir identity. A crooner, in the classic sense, is a mid-20th century figure — Sinatra, Dean Martin, Bing Crosby, Matt Monro, Nat King Cole. But I’m making this music in the 21st century from Southeast Asia using distributed digital production. So ‘The 25th Century Crooner’ is a way of saying: the tradition is alive, but it’s been teleported. The voice is vintage. The method is futuristic. The geography is global, distributed.

What’s next for The Shared Frequency Initiative after this release?

Needle on the Rim is Volume 1. Camerado’s Shared Frequency Initiative is designed to be multi-volume, distributed, and multi-format. Future productions will involve film and interactive media as well as more music of course. Forthcoming efforts will explore different genres, different ensembles, different regions. Anywhere creative collaboration meets geopolitical or logistical friction, there’s a project waiting.

For now, the priority is getting this EP, ‘Needle on the Rim’ in front of the right ears. The release hits all platforms March 27, 2026 — Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube Music, Tidal, Bandcamp. We’re also exploring legacy media formats, which is most likely to include cassette tape off the bat since it’s inexpensive and can be produced à la carte.

The frequency is shared. The signal is live. Tune in!

‘NEEDLE ON THE RIM’ RELEASE DETAILS

Artist: Robert Marleigh

EP: Needle on the Rim — The Shared Frequency Initiative, Vol. 1

Release Date: March 27, 2026

Genre: Vocal Jazz / Cinematic Noir / Future Noir

Distribution: Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube Music, Tidal, Bandcamp

‘NEEDLE ON THE RIM’ MUSICIANS & CREDITS

Gaby Courroux, Guitar | Rudy Fantin, Organ | Philippe Javelle, Clarinet | Robert Marleigh, Vocals | Krit Muangyoo, Percussion | Jason Rosette, Additional Percussion & Samples | Leo Salazar, Flute | Ravee Treesaksesakoon, Trumpet | Aria Isley, Augmented Architecture

Mixing & Mastering by Camerado Media

CONTACT

Email: camerado@camerado.com

Web: robertmarleigh.com | camerado.com/needle-on-the-rim

Linktree: linktr.ee/robertmarleigh

Press Contact: Jason Rosette, Camerado Media | camerado@camerado.com