

CHRIS ANTONIK | Morningstar
Long-form Album Bio

Featuring guests Jarekus Singleton, Paul Deslauriers, Mike Mattison
Release Date: August 5, 2022

Navigating the process of any loss, while dealing with life's many other challenges, is not easy. Even more challenging is trying to make sense of it all within the midst of a global pandemic. However, with hope, love and community, anything is possible, and this is the story of *Morningstar*, the fourth studio album from Canadian blues-rock guitarist, singer, songwriter, and 3x-Maple Blues Award-nominee **Chris Antonik**.

Morningstar is a joyous blend of incendiary blues-rock guitar playing, poignant songwriting, and lush sonic landscapes, that tells a cohesive story of Antonik's experiences as he enters mid-life. The last few years' worth of life, love, loss, and growth are synthesized into an epic collection of songs about new beginnings, building community, mindfulness, self-compassion, Antonik's sobriety, and the power of home.

Co-produced by Juno Award-winning producer **Derek Downham** and Antonik, the album's 14 songs take you on an epic sonic journey rooted in blues and blues rock, with intriguing byways taken via routes of soul, future-funk, psychedelia, late-1980's-Clapton/Robbie Robertson/Daniel Lanois and experimental turns into blues-based modern rock and hip-hop territories.

While *Morningstar* is mindful of blues tradition, it is an adventurous record of songs, weaving classic with contemporary, and stretching every idea across the aural spectrum. Through it all, Antonik plays his guitar with unbridled ferocity and passion, mining his soul deeper than he ever has before.

The blistering lead-off track, *Waves of Stone*, hits like a thunderbolt, with its riff-driven blues-rock, classic blues themes, modern-rock intensity, and Antonik trading searing lead guitar solos with American counterpart, 3x-Blues Music Award nominee, **Jarekus Singleton**.

The late-80's-Clapton influenced, commercial blues-rock of *Pilgrim*, features big riffs and retro synthesizer. About the importance of building community and connecting with others, the track was inspired by Carl Jung's theories on human priorities in the "second half" of life: becoming more conscious and re-connecting with the human tribe.

Next up is *Back to the Good*, a hopeful, blues-rock ear worm / singalong about self-compassion, that features a slinky and powerful Hendrix-inspired chromatic riff.

The blues/hip-hop hybrid, *Trust in Me*, is a dramatic cry for help, that features one of the fiercest guitar solos Antonik has ever recorded. The track is his chronicle of single parenting during the Trump era and guiding his children through the toxic media environment propagated by politicians of all stripes.

In Our Home follows - a dreamy, melancholic, Zeppelin-inspired song about the power of home, featuring a vocal duet with Antonik's partner, Juno Award-nominated jazz artist **Alison Young**. The state of Canada-U.S. relations is lamented with *The Greatest of the Americans (Part II)*, which cleverly parallels the state of the two nations' friendship with the breakdown of a couple's cross-border love affair, while *Learning to Love You*, Antonik's love letter to the Derek and the Dominos' *Layla* album, lights it up.

Then comes the Tower of Power/Bruno Mars-like blues-disco energy of *How to Be Alone*, which features the sonic surprise of an '80s Linn drum machine. The traditional stomp-blues shuffle of *We're Not Alone* is next, with multiple-Maple Blues Award-winning guitarist **Paul Deslauriers** and Antonik trading furious solos.

The record rounds out with *The Promise of Airfields*, an eight-minute-Latin-rock, psychedelic, jam-band epic, in which Antonik celebrates his sobriety. A heartfelt tribute to his son follows with *Little Man*, rolling into the funky blues-rock and positive reflections on mindfulness of *Be Here Now*, featuring vocalist and 2x-Grammy Award- winner **Mike Mattison** (*Tedeschi-Trucks Band*, *Derek Trucks Band*, *Scrapomatic*).

Morningstar concludes its journey with the beautiful, plaintive ballad *Grace*, a song of gratitude, self-compassion and surrender after loss. Guitar fans will want to stick around until the end of this one.

Chris says: "I wanted to do two things with this record – one - push the boundaries of modern blues and blues-rock. And two - tell a sincere story about the human experience that others could relate to. I believe we achieved both. And while each song can be heard as a stand-alone piece, together the tracks comprise an even greater connected saga."

The album features **Derek Downham** and **Riley O'Connor** on drums, Juno Award- and Maple Blues Award-winner **Jesse O'Brien** (Colin James, Harrison Kennedy) and **Alan Zemaitis** on keyboards. Revered Canadian gospel singers **Marlene O'Neill** and **Ciceal Levy** lend their

stunning harmony vocals throughout the album. Juno Award-nominee **Alison Young** and Juno Award-winner **Richard Underhill** co-arranged horns, with Juno Award-winner **William Carn** and **Tom Moffett** (Arkells, BadBadNotGood) filling out the horn section. Renowned pedal steel player **Burke Carrol** and Toronto jazz-rock flautist **Rob Christian** also appear.

Morningstar is also the final recording of long-time Antonik tour manager and bassist, the late **Guenther Kapelle**, who played bass on the album and, sadly, passed away last year.

Continuing Chris' tradition of collaborative songwriting, *Morningstar* brings together several of his long-time writing partners, including **Ben Fisher, Henry Lees, and Heather Pirie**, while featuring additional writing contributions from **Derek Downham, Alison Young, Guenther Kapelle, Riley O'Connor, Dan McKinnon, and Zack Stuckey**.

From Antonik's own Second Half Records, in partnership with Moon Dog Music, *Morningstar* was engineered by Grammy Award-winner **Jeremy Darby** (David Bowie, Lou Reed, Alicia Keys, Van Morrison) and **Julian Decorte** at Toronto's Canterbury Music Company, with additional engineering by **Tim Foy** and **Lee Rogers**. It was mixed by Juno Award- and Polaris Prize Award-nominee **Alex Gamble** (Arkells, Bruce Cockburn) and mastered by nine-time Juno Award-winner **Andy Krehm**. **Ted Onyszczak**, who co-produced and mixed Chris' three previous albums, served as a special mix advisor.

That's quite an esteemed community that came together to help Chris create an album that shines like a beacon of hope and change, as darkness moves into light.

The title of the album comes from a line in *Walden*, by American poet Henry David Thoreau - "*Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star,*" - a nod to new beginnings and heightened awareness.

"What's interesting to me is that all these songs about community, re-connection, and self-compassion, etc., were written prior to the pandemic. I think they are much more meaningful now, and I hope they makes others feel good."

Morningstar releases on August 5, 2022.

Track Listing

1. Waves of Stone (feat. Jarekus Singleton) (5:13) (C. Antonik/D. McKinnon)
2. Pilgrim (4:12) (C. Antonik/B. Fisher/D. Downham)
3. Back to the Good (4:14) (C. Antonik/H. Lees/D. Downham)
4. Trust in Me (5:12) (C. Antonik/ D. McKinnon/ D. Downham/A. Young)
5. In Our Home (feat. Alison Young) (5:22) (C. Antonik/B. Fisher/H. Lees)
6. The Greatest of the Americans (Part I) (1:54) (C. Antonik/A. Young)
7. The Greatest of the Americans (Part II) (6:15) (C. Antonik/H. Lees/D. Downham/A. Young)
8. Learning to Love You (4:23) (C. Antonik/R. O'Connor/G. Kapelle/D. Downham)
9. How to be Alone (5:19) (C. Antonik/H. Lees/Z. Stuckey)
10. We're Not Alone (feat. Paul Deslauriers) (3:13) (C. Antonik/B. Fisher/D. Downham)
11. The Promise of Airfields (8:25) (C. Antonik/B. Fisher/H. Lees/A. Young)
12. Little Man (4:16) (C. Antonik/H. Pirie/D. Downham/A. Young)
13. Be Here Now (feat. Mike Mattison) (4:47) (B. Fisher/C. Antonik/R. O'Connor)
14. Grace (6:37) (H. Lees/C. Antonik/H. Pirie/A. Young)