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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Nice job! Small fixes. Only major thing to note are spellings: Brendan Taaffe and Stefan Amidon and album title *The Bucolics Project*.

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

#####BEGIN HED#####

1 Making music for his neighbors

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#####BEGIN SUBHED#####

2 After a fall of touring, Guilford singer-songwriter Luke
3 Concannon is back home and ready to begin monthly concerts at
4 the Guilford Country Store

#####END SUBHED#####

5 TEXT BODY:

#####BEGIN TEXT#####

6 Guilford-based singer-songwriter Luke Concannon is
7 Irish, but he grew up in England, where he was influenced by
8 Van Morrison, Joni Mitchell, Otis Redding, and Aretha Franklin,
9 as well as by hip-hop "that did what singer songwriters did in the

10 '60s in terms of speaking truth to power and finding liberating
11 ways of creating."

12 Inevitably, too, he was infused with his native Celtic
13 roots music.

14 "Music was a family affair," says Concannon, who grew
15 up with "sort of hippie type parents."

16 "My dad's a piper and a tin whistle player," he says. "My
17 uncle sang ballads and played the guitar. And my aunties all
18 dance and sing and my mum dances. And so we just grew up
19 with music and dance being part of the scene and it was just so
20 liberatory for us and gave us so much life, and it is the reason I
21 do it now."

22 Among more recent influences and inspirations, he adds,
23 fatherhood. Of his new son, he says "he's just so rich in his spirit
24 and in the gifts he brings. He wakes me up. He gives me energy."

25 After a busy fall, Concannon is back from another tour,
26 primed to get his new album out there and, with wife and music
27 partner, Stephanie Hollenberg, is preparing to host another
28 community music event at the Guilford Country Store.

29 Of the new album, *Midnight Bloom*, created in
30 collaboration with New York City-based producer, songwriter,
31 instrumentalist, and educator Darius Christian, Concannon
32 explains its title.

33 "In a way, it's a dark time in our culture and civilization,"
34 he says. And, in fact, it was a little dark in his own sphere.

35 Three years ago, Concannon continues, "I did nine
36 weeks where I was cycling between gigs and sleeping on sofas
37 and running workshops and coaching artists and promoting the
38 gigs. And I came back and my body sort of fell apart."

39 Dealing with illness, while "building a yurt in the
40 Vermont woods and living in a two-man tent, the *Midnight*
41 *Bloom* theme emerged. In a way, it's been a bit of a dark night of
42 the soul. And yet, a lot of this music came out of it and a lot of
43 good things" and good people.

44 To wit, his baby son, Oren.

45 "So it's this paradox where, in dark times, there's a lot of
46 joy and creativity as well," which is, he acknowledges, life.

47 "Isn't it weird, right?" he says. "Sometimes it has to get
48 bad before it gets good, right?"

49 **A busy fall on both sides of the 50 Atlantic**

51 Concannon did a UK tour in October before the
52 November album release and then a New England tour. ("We
53 called it the Old England, New England tour," he says.)

54 "The amazing Sadie Gustafson-Zook opened for me in
55 England, and then I opened for her in New England," he says.
56 "And it was just really beautiful to share these songs. So much life
57 has gone into the songs and then I just feel really joyful to
58 actually get to share them with people."

59 Some were shared quite broadly when Concannon and
60 John Parker — as their original chart-topping duo Nizlopi —
61 opened for popular singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran on a European
62 tour in December.

63 The backstory, Concannon explains, is that "Ed did work
64 experience with us when he was 14. He was a really big fan of
65 my duo Nizlopi. And we've kept in touch since."

66 When Sheeran heard Nizlopi was re-releasing an earlier
67 album on vinyl, his interest piqued. Concannon suggested that
68 "we could bring the music to you and open some shows."
69 Sheeran responded, "Really? Would you do that?"

70 And they did.

71 On Sheeran's latest tour for his album *Play*, Nizlopi had a
72 45-minute opening slot in concerts, playing to thousands in Paris,
73 Munich, Coventry, Manchester, and Dublin. That was just a few
74 weeks ago.

75 "Yeah, in Munich there were 23,000 people, more
76 people than we've ever played to in one show," Concannon says.
77 "Manchester was about the same size. So we just were just

78 practicing what's it like to play for this many people, right? It's a
79 different energy. But it was great."

80 In addition to older Nizlopi tunes, Concannon and
81 others played songs off *Midnight Bloom* and Hollenberg sang on
82 one the album's more potent tunes, "A Woman Is Sacred."

83 All this happened with Oren, "who got to do his first
84 European tour," Concannon quips.

85 **Back home again in Guilford**

86 After all that, Concannon and Hollenberg are home
87 where they feel increasingly vested in the Guilford community.

88 "We really want to be making music in community. And
89 my dream, because we're up on Sweet Pond, was to have a gig I
90 could cycle to. And Guilford Country Store is such a beautiful
91 place. [Owner] Ali [West] and the team put so much love into it."

92 Thus, the second Sunday of each month, Hollenberg and
93 Concannon hope to offer a live music and folk sessions at the
94 store at 475 Coolidge Highway (Route 5) in Guilford.

95 Starting at 3:30 p.m. each month is a folk music session,
96 which, Concannon explains, "in my Irish family tradition is
97 where all are welcome to respectfully share. If you're a complete
98 beginner, you are welcome obviously to share in a way that
99 respects the overall event. But there are some really skilled
100 players in the community."

101 "People here," he adds, "might think of it more as a jam
102 where tunes are shared" among whoever shows up.

103 Following the jam at each event, a special guest artist is
104 featured. For the next event — this Sunday, Jan. 11 — that will be
105 Brendan Taaffe and Stefan Amidon.

106 "The Amidons are great, southern Vermont folk royalty,"
107 Concannon says. And Taaffe and Amidon "just put out a record
108 together, which is beautiful, called *The Bucolics Project*, with
109 musicians from all over [including Appalachia]. Great people and
110 poetry from a legendary Appalachian poet: very reverent,
111 beautiful, soulful, grounded music."

112 The Country Store offers a menu for the event with light
113 meals and snacks, selected beer and wine. "And there's always
114 those pastries Ali makes," Concannon adds, praising the expert
115 pastry chef's work.

116 "Everyone is welcome. And if folks want to see this
117 happening in the community, then, please, your presence is the
118 best present, because this will carry on in so much as people
119 show that they want and need it."

120 Concannon urges folks to "please come on down" to
121 enjoy community, live music, fine food and drink and, good
122 "craic" — Irish for fun and entertainment — and just a good time.

123 He said there's no cover for the kid-friendly event, but
124 "we will pass a hat for the guest artists just to keep feeding our
125 area creatives so they can keep making music to share with us."

126 "We're doing it because we want more music, more life,
127 more community, more fun," Concannon says. "You know, we
128 want to be shining our light in a dark time."

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Bio/COATTAIL:

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129 For more information about Luke Concannon's Second
130 Sunday concerts at the Guilford Country Store, visit
131 lukeconcannon.com and guilfordcountrystore.com.

#####END BIO/COATTAIL#####

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