REVIEW · BLUES

# *Break the Chain* | Doug MacLeod

*A father promises his son that the violence will stop with him. Then they sing it together.*

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A father makes a promise to his son: the violence will stop with him. Then father and son sing it together. The promise stops being just a sentence and takes shape in the music, like a knot that finally comes undone.

*Break the Chain* is the title track of the 2017 album. Doug MacLeod has spoken about the abuse he suffered as a child and the severe stutter linked to that experience. Singing gave him the chance to have a voice. From his mentor Ernest Banks he kept one simple principle: write what you know.

For this song MacLeod worked with his son Jesse. He had promised him that the chain of violence would end with him, and Jesse sings on the recording. He is not only the one those words are addressed to: his voice enters the song and gives it a concrete shape. The promise becomes a sound, a broken link falling: **clink**, and the silence changes shape. It is as if the singing opened a window in a house that had stayed shut for too long.

The album was recorded live at Skywalker Sound, with no overdubs and no effects. There is no need to assume the choice was made to mirror the lyric. But the parallel is there to hear: a song that confronts family omissions and silences reaches the listener through a performance that is **direct, bare, exposed, alive and sincere**, not pieced together bit by bit.

MacLeod does not tell a story of easy healing. The title sounds like a decision, but the song puts it to the test in the present. Father and son share the voice; for a moment the next generation does not repeat the chain: it bends it, breaks it, gives it another ending, like a door closed on the past and opened on tomorrow.

> ***Can singing that story together become, beyond music, concrete proof that the chain does not have to go on?***

LISTEN

## *Break the Chain* — Doug MacLeod — is in our playlist Acoustic Blues, Roots & Dust.

Doug MacLeod. Updated every Friday. Selected by ear.