

**Collaborators, Life-Partners, and Musicians Roswell Rudd and Verna Gillis Release First Video Single Of Their New Project THE OLDERS – “Awesome and Gruesome”, an Infectious “Ranthem” About Love, Strength and Humor in the Face of Cancer, Aging and Mortality**

Verna Gillis, 74, and Roswell Rudd, 81, have been partners and collaborators, living together in Kerhonkson, Ulster County, NY since 2000. Rudd is a universally acclaimed and beloved trombonist, known for his innovative work with luminaries like Steve Lacy, Milford Graves (with the New York Art Quartet), Archie Shepp (notably on the seminal Impulse! records *Live in San Francisco* and *Four For Trane*), Albert Ayler, and many many more. Gillis holds a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology and was on faculty at both Brooklyn College and Carnegie Mellon. Gillis is widely recognized for her recordings of traditional musics from Afghanistan, Iran, Kashmir, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Peru, Surinam, and Ghana. In the 1980s, she opened Soundscape – the first multi-cultural performance space in New York City.

In 2010 Gillis started performing Stand – Up/ Sit Down Comedy. Her one woman show **TALES FROM GERIASSIC PARK - On the Verge of Extinction** won Best Comedic Script in 2014 at the United Solo Theatre Festival in NYC

Gillis & Rudd first worked together at SOUNDSCAPE and notably in 1983 for the concert/recording **INTERPRETATIONS OF MONK**. Life conspired in such a way that the two long-time friends became romantically involved in 2000. Since then, their work together has taken them to performing and recording in Mali, China, Mongolia, Siberia, Russia, Benin and across the United States.

Now they're set to publish the first video-single of their new projects dubbed **THE OLDERS**. The idea for this single, “**Awesome and Gruesome**” (with lyrics and concept by Gillis and music by Rudd) came from Rudd's recent years of struggle with cancer, and yet through it all, maintaining his characteristic virtuosic musicality and humor. It was exemplified by two nearly-contiguous days with rather different circumstances – on April 2, 2016, Roswell Rudd was an invited guest at the Kennedy Center Jazz Masters Awards, then on April 4<sup>th</sup> had a biopsy at Sloan Kettering in NYC dealing with aggressive cancer he's had since 2013. At Sloan Kettering, Gillis said to Rudd, “you're going from awesome to gruesome”.

Once she said that the wheels were put in motion and she wrote “Awesome and Gruesome”, which is the first in a new genre that Gillis has devised which she dubbed “**Ranthem**”. It's a memorable sing-along, with hilariously irreverent and blunt lyrics atop an infectious backbeat, with notable trombone interjections. Throughout its verses, Rudd and Gillis trade lines, categorizing a host of things as “awesome” or “gruesome”. What shines through, though, is the love they have for one another and for life itself – cherishing everything and thriving in the face of this “gruesome” obstacle. The song's refrain gets to the heart of the matter: “everything is as it never was/we're holding on some, we're hanging in some”.

Hearteningly, the video ends with friends and neighbors, spiritedly singing along to the song's

theme "Awesome and Gruesome, what a fucking twosome".

Gillis & Rudd are recording instrumental versions of **BALLAD OF AWESOME & GRUESOME**  
and **Awesome & Gruesome Shuffle**

**A new National Ranthem is in the works.**

**"Dance to lyrics about cancer, mortality, loss and less,"  
suggests Verna Gillis.**

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