

Jon Gomm - Don't Panic Review

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Jon Gomm - Don't Panic (Performing Chimp Records)

What do the following musicians and singer-songwriters all have in common? Chris Lowe (Pet Shop Boys), Nick McCarthy (Franz Ferdinand), Graham Nash (The Hollies, Crosby, Stills, Nash (and Young), Maddy Prior (Steeleye Span), Robert Smith (The Cure) and Roy Harper? Well, they were all born in Blackpool.

A little closer to home – Leeds, to be exact - but also via Blackpool, hail the likes of Little Boots, formerly of Dead Disco, Dave James (Cardboard Cowboy and The Lazy Darlings) and, the subject of this review, Jon Gomm. All stalwarts of the music scene in Leeds in recent years.

I first heard him play quite a few years ago now at The Royal Park Cellars. I was sat with my back to the stage when suddenly my ears were filled with what sounded like a 4 piece band on stage. Vacating my seat, I was after all supposed to be photographing the gig, I was surprised to see just one man and his guitar on stage. I was mesmerized from the very beginning as Jon strummed, finger-picked, detuned, retuned, tapped and knocked his way through his amazing repertoire.

It was around that time that he released his first album entitled Hypertension (2003), which blew me away from the very first listen. It included 2 covers in Bob Marley's Waiting in Vein and Radiohead's High and Dry, along with ten other self-penned beauties, all of which were done in single takes and with no overdubs.

December 2009 sees the release of Don't Panic, Jon's second album, but this time there's not a cover version in sight. Waterfall opens the album nicely, with its backwards intro and, if you close your eyes, you can hear the sounds of the water flowing from above, dripping in parts and hitting the rocks below, all created solely on the guitar. Afterglow comes next and is in a more conventional guitar style, beautifully played and with a great vocal. Temporary sweeps over you with its dreamlike opening, while Gloria, a song I've heard my times live in concert, looks a worthy contender for other musicians to cover. A great composition! Topeka is an instrumental to die for and show's just what a virtuoso guitarist we have here. In a word, amazing!! Loveproof is the perfect marriage between guitar and vocal, while Surrender shows Jon in great blues form, while, of course, adding his own take on that particular musical genre. Fabulous. Rescue Song swirls around nicely, while The Weather Machine sees Jon going down the Flamenco route, before another instrumental in Wake Up! leaves me openmouthed and in awe of this man's talents. What's Left For You? finishes off this great, great album. A duet with Natasha Koczy (Gallo, Loqui), who's in fine voice and this is the perfect ending.

I just wonder how long we will have to wait for the third album, Jon?. In saying that, the same approach seemed to work for Stanley Kubrick.

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