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Drew Smith

Written by Danté Dominick



Drew Smith's Lonely Choir
Drew Smith's Lonely Choir
 Viro Records / Fat Caddy Records
 (Release Date: 9.5.08)

Beatlesque is a term bandied about rather frequently. But how often do you think, "this could've been a Beatles album"? Drew Smith's *Lonely Choir* is a modern day Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band right down to the brilliant packaging, the insert an elaborately cut, hand-drawing of a military band from a bygone era. Lest we get carried too far with a Beatles motif, there are times Smith seems more the progeny of Van Morrison ("Silver Pictures"), as well as some undertones of wispy-fiddle Americana ("NYC Song") totally foreign to the Fab Four. But starting with the first staccato piano of opener "Nilsson Sings Newman," it's a thought that keeps sneaking in while listening to Drew Smith. The remarkably crafty song arrangements (a big nod goes to Matt Russell, who also plays all the keys), the enraptured songwriting and delivery, the highly varied instrumentation—it all adds up. Drew Smith and Matt Russell display intangible deft to orchestrate trumpets, trombones, fiddle, pedal steel, Rhodes, banjo, saxes into a sound simultaneously pop-hook catchy (for the here and now) and smart-art NPR-ready (for the critical immortality).

Drew Smith's Lonely Choir encompasses more open range than the state of Wyoming. The bop-ba-da-da chorus of infectiously fun "Diamonds" is supplanted by the stark power of "Something So Much," with a drawn out funeral-parlor-meets-Verve-lounge organ weighing heavy upon the chest. Smith opens, "I've watched every blade of this grass grow," echoing the song's slow build. Three verses in the organ peaks with a cymbal crash and chorus of enveloping horns as Smith digs deep, "Oh, I'll bleed her name through the threads of all my sweaters / She gives me something, so much to hold on to."

With *Lonely Choir*, Drew Smith has given us much to hold on to.

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