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REVIEW

Music Review: Drew Smith's Lonely Choir - *Drew Smith's Lonely Choir*

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Sometimes lost in the roots-rock, alt-country sound that has come to typify Austin music is a handful of very, very good pop bands with chart-topping success, such as Spoon and Fastball. Such a band is Drew Smith's Lonely Choir. [Smith](#) is a self-described disciple of '70s pop, a sound that — on his new album — is freshly updated and beautifully delivered.

The opening track, "Nilsson Sings Newman", gets its title from an album on which Harry Nilsson sings Randy Newman songs. The song describes listening to a new album with a good friend and letting your troubles go, realizing that "things are only getting better over time anyway". It serves as the perfect opening for a studio album that continues the tradition of two of the most prolific singer-songwriters in American pop music: Randy Newman ("Mama Told Me Not to Come" and many [more](#)) and Harry Nilsson ("Everybody's Talkin'" and many [more](#)).

The lush songs flow gently from one to another, artfully arranged by Drew Smith's longtime collaborator, Matt Russell. All the songs are original compositions except "New Year's Day," on which Smith and Russell share writing credits. Friendship is a theme throughout many of the songs; "NYC Song" tells a tale of a sunny day spent with a good friend in the city, followed by the toe-tapping "Diamonds" with an offer to buy his baby the truth.

In "Silver Pictures" Smith channels another of his idols, Van Morrison, with rich saxophone backing the tale of a concert road trip and the illusions and disillusion of youth. Each song has a distinct sound and showcases different instruments; "Silver Pictures" is followed by dreamy pedal steel guitar and piano of "New Year's Day," balanced by Smith's rich voice. The tone of the album slowly shifts as we "Travel My Dark Road."

My favorite song on the album is "Follow Me Down." After humming it to myself for a few days, I took a cue from the opening track and listened to it with my best friend, who pronounced this tune as "Silky smooth pop with a hook I can't believe I'm not hearing on the radio." Another highlight of the album is "Are You Lonely," which is a full-on press of instrumentation and vocals which sound anything but lonely. The call and response vocals with "the lonely choir" give the album its name. When the band performs live, the entire audience sings along to this rousing tune.

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