

Reviewer

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D.B. Rielly

Purposefully Vague and Cryptic

DB Rielly music review

by Jenn Nastri

Mr. D.B. Rielly has got it all down. A purposefully vague and cryptic web bio ("born in the hearts and minds of lonely widows and raised by traveling vacuum salesmen, schooled by rifle toting brides of God"), sepia toned photographs, a daguerreotype of a turn of the century (the 20th) performer holding an accordion, an album entitled Love Potions & Snake Oil. OK dude, we get it. All of these images and words setting the tone for exactly what you get. Music from another time, another era, forgotten in an age of autotune, processed beats, pop-punk, and emo.

"Changed My Mind" begins with that backwoods twang of a guitar that calls to mind the deep south, collapsing porches of faded wood sharecropper shacks, moonshine, and sweat rolling off the back of your neck. The intro, leads into rolling steel guitar solos that make you want to close your eyes and loll your head, getting caught up and swept away in a way only blues riffs can. In comes the harmonica, just enough to punctuate in the background but not overpower. It's actually a bit of a surprise to hear Rielly's clear smooth voice singing, instead of the grizzled throaty voice you'd expect. He uses some cliché lyrics (prefacing one impressive solo with "Here I come") but hell, that's what makes the blues the blues. Though the song follows the formula, it doesn't come across a stale, or trite, and the work on the guitar (he is on acoustic, Hiro Suzuki on steel & electric) is worth your 4 minutes alone.

"Save All Your Kisses" is a ballad, sweet piano and what is that... an accordion? Yup. Not your Weird Al or polka accordion, but it's there. It fills in the sound while Rielly repeats his request to "save all your kisses for me" to the love he's separated from. He channels Nick Lowe and dare I say even some John Cale with this song but injects it his own signature sound enough to call it his own. The song could be about any love separated by circumstance, but if it was written to appease a girl back home, she should welcome him home with all of those saved kisses, for sure.

On the other side of love's coin is "I Got a Girlfriend", an upbeat zydeco song that places you at some dance in bayou country. It's easy to imagine a packed dance hall of square dancers do-si-do-ing and twirling their partner round and round to the sounds of a Cajun influenced squeeze box and finger picked guitar riffs as Rielly sings about his girlfriend...that he met by kidnapping to keep for his very own in a Hefty bag under his bed. Imagine Guns N' Roses "Used to Love Her" but with a lot more accordion. Along the same (musical) vein is "One of These Days", another toe tapping country/zydeco tune about an on again off again relationship that is in the off again stage and he wants to make on again permanently.

"Got A Mind" tells the story of the father of a rape victim with the desire to take justice into his own hands. Among a backdrop of slide guitar and banjo pickin Rielly asserts he's going to introduce the man that "stole his daughter's innocence" to Smith & Wesson, among other death sentences he proposes to administer. He repeats "I know it's a sin but I don't care" about his desire for more revenge than the law will allow, and the bare bones music accompaniment is just right for a narrative song like this. You follow the story with images in your mind, and the phrasing of words and language ("I got a mind to learn that man a lesson", the inflection of the word "care" to "keer") brings the song/story together with the flavour of deep south Americana.

"Love Me Today" is another soft ballad, this time with an acoustic guitar to go with the piano of "Save All Your Kisses". The drum beats in the background almost mimic that of a heartbeat and again the accordion brings a fuller sound to the entire composition of the song as Rielly doesn't ask to be loved forever, just today.

Reviving and breathing life into a genre of music mostly reserved for Cajun country and Popeye's commercials is no small feat, especially while retaining the sound and style to satisfy purists and fans of the original American roots music, but I would say D.B. Rielly has done a pretty damn decent job of doing both. Though the persona may be a bit contrived and stereotypical, the music he backs it up with is 100% genuine.

