

mxdown

February 18th, 2013

Matt Costa – Matt Costa



Folk For The Rest Of Us

There are few things more American than Southern California. A native of Huntington Beach, Matt Costa's music has always had a breezy nature. But on his latest album, he turned to the rainy British Isles for a new recording location (Glasgow) and, clearly, some inspiration. Loaded with horns and strings, his self-titled fourth record is wrapped in moody textures and plenty of variation, as if clouds continuously passed over the recording studio. At times heartwarming, at other times reminiscent and always introspective, this California musician expanded his sound many times over since his last album, the electric-drenched *Mobile Chateau*.

This record is full. It has a big sound and takes up a lot of sonic space. "Loving You" begins, for instance, with a melancholy string section and builds piece by piece into a full-on rocking love song. He pays homage to the Beach Boys, fellow California kids, with poppy, high vocals and upbeat guitars. This track sounds confident. It stands out as the most straightforward rock song on the record. The rest of the album consists mostly of folk songs, many with traditional British qualities.

"Laura Lee" is certainly one of those. Costa's voice echoes over a lush arrangement of acoustic guitars. They compliment each other while still maintaining individual melodies. "Silver Sea" similarly experiments with strings. It features a tambour, picked rather than strummed, to create an adventurous, nautical sound. It could be a song sang by eighteenth-century swashbucklers or homesick sailors, as Costa sings, "Building a ship built for two / In the waves she'll be tossed / In a wooden ship for two / Silver Sea we were lost." The departure from his usual pop-rock style serves him well, especially as a lyricist.

Any Costa fans old and new should also listen to the album commentary, available on Spotify and Rdio. The soft-spoken musician talks his way through the record, explaining the technological and musical magic behind each song. More artists should offer treats like this. Listeners might be wondering "Why does this sound so different from anything you've done before?" Matt Costa cares enough about his music to sit down and explain it to us.