

Don't Leave Home Without One by dB+1

Out of the woods of northwestern Connecticut comes a new musical release from composer-musician, multimedia man Doug Branson. *Don't Leave Home Without One* is the title of the disk and Branson has a host of friends join him as well as performing some of the tunes by himself.



He performed and recorded most of the tracks in his hay barn Connecticut studio under the trees and recorded additional tracks at studios in upstate New York, Massachusetts and Philadelphia. His tracks provide a wonderful case study for a psychology student in this roller coaster ride of his emotions and influences of the past couple years. The titles tell the story yet the tunes often portray another as Branson organizes a cluster of his writing and singing voices throughout.

It opens with "You are the Girl" featuring a country piano track and a middle-of-the-road feel to this simple tune with the varying sounds of dB's vocals with an interesting distant echo effect on backing vocal tracks hinting at trouble ahead.

“Your Boyfriend is a Dick.”

So much for FM airplay.

Branson employs the rasp in his voice for this gem, the second on the disk, and gets right to the point. John Couch intersperses a flowing lead guitar throughout and Bobbi “FunkeeBoy” Tammaro adds some flavor with the keys. I’m sure dB has met a few dick boyfriends in his time and may regret not being more forthcoming to the girlfriends.

“He’s a dick ... at least he thinks with it” and “I told you his name is Richard,” spoken by one of the girls in the background, are two classic lines adding to the fun and I’d be willing to bet the guy’s name was not Richard at all, although I’m quite sure he was a dick, and probably still is.

Did dB write this song to his girlfriend in a fit of self-loathing?

dB plays all the tracks on “Under the Stars,” mixing simple keyboard lines with soft crunching rhythm guitars in a straight-ahead blues trek. As odd as it sounds the first time, it grows with each listen. Just one of those things. “Excellent Day” brings us another voice from the same singer, giving us a quick look at another one of his personalities in a spirit of new beginning. The beauty of the song is the singer’s sincere lack of insincerity.

A haunting synth track lays a nice background to “Silent Streets,” perhaps an ode to English/Punk/Grunge influences with dB doing his best Lou Reed. Heartfelt keyboard and guitar chords drive the tune with the lead vocalist’s alter-ego on backing vocals. Interesting effect of the two vocals fighting off each other throughout and it’s all Mr. dB himself. Somebody give Ziggy Stardust a copy of this.

“I’m Not Laughin’ About It.”

This one was left off a Crazy World of Arthur Brown album in the sixties - well maybe - and brought back to life by dB with a fine guitar solo at the end. It’ll be OK, dB, really. I know *it’s* not funny, but I don’t know what *it* is, either.

dB characteristically utilizes a composite of styles on “People, Places and Things.” The track features hints of SKA - ala Madness - with instrumental jams that could fit on a Matchbox Foo Peppers album, not that there’s anything wrong with that. Great break into a guitar jam midway through to send the tune on its way to a furious finish before stepping back into a stylish piano (McKean Sinkler) interlude to calm things down. Great drum track (Ed McGrogan) too and a nice touch with the guitar fade (Herc Fede) leading the way out the door. Best moments on the disk.

“The Rant (F-Word Version).”

A possible subconscious ode to Ian Hunter without the young dudes, Mr. dB may still be pissed off at the dick boyfriend here. He is from Philly after all, and those guys carry a grudge and step up for their women. Excellent cameo appearances by more of dB’s personalities, particularly a buzzing background vocal “she said, she said” bouncing off the power chords.

I only wish “This is a Beautiful Country” was longer. I’m taking the title at face value but who knows. No vocals but another fine piano performance by Sinkler and lead guitar by Fede carry this song to a place Branson and Fede mapped out. The guitars with Darrin Gardiner’s bass and the straight groove by McGrogan work. Simple and sweet. Message received. Another fine mix out of Millennium Studios with the boys in Philly.

The disk has more tracks including “Suicide Bomber” and “Ode 2 Kurt Cobain” as well as “Terrible Videos on MTV,” which takes us to a place where none of us wants to go. I think that is the point, but I believe dB really wants to hit the MTV scene. Be careful man, *EVERYONE’S* boyfriend is a dick in those circles.