

John Parish - Bird Dog Dante (2018)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Add To The List* 2 *Sorry For Your Loss* 3 *The March* 4 *Let's Go* 5 *Type 1* 6 *Rachel* 7 *Buffalo* 8 *Kireru* 9 *Le Passé Devant Nous* 10 *Carver's House* 11 *The First Star* John Parish - Composer, Instrumentation, Mixing, Producer, Vocals Aldous Harding, Giorgia Poli, Giovanni Ferrario, Jean-Marc Butty, Jeremy Hogg, Marta Collica, PJ Harvey - Instrumentation, Vocals

Producer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist John Parish has spent the 2010s scoring independent films and recording soundtracks, and producing for others, from PJ Harvey (whose road band he directs), Rokia Traore, and Jenny Hval to Tom Brousseau, This Is the Kit, and Aldous Harding. Bird Dog Dante is his first proper vocal album since 2009's collaboration with Harvey on *A Woman a Man Walked By* and his own *Once Upon a Little Time*. The two soundtrack projects issued since, *She, A Chinese* (2010), and *Screenplay: The Film Music of John Parish* (2013), have nonetheless informed this wonderfully weird venture. Parish wrote and recorded these songs in a variety of locations, often while on the road, in keeping with his long established aesthetic M.O. He covered the seams in this approach (somewhat) by mixing it all in a ten-day session between bouts of touring with Harvey's extended band in support of her *Hope Six Demolition Project*.

While traveling, Parish often ran lyric ideas past Harvey. One such exercise was undertaken for this set's first single, "Sorry for Your Loss," a song dedicated to the memory of their mutual friend Mark Linkous who took his own life in 2010. Upon completion, Parish decided it would work best as a duet as the pair deliver it here -- its lyrics and melody directly relate to the deep, isolating depression that plagued Linkous. Its eerie electronic whine is answered by a slightly de-tuned strummed banjo (a favorite instrument of Linkous' and one he used often), as Jeremy Hogg's stinging, gated guitar underscores the refrain: "The sun never felt colder/The window rattled and I wondered if you'd just passed over...." Hogg and Parish deliver the oddly tender and utterly ironic "Type 1" -- a paean to diabetes -- as a duo. "Rachel" is delivered as an early rock & roll song in duet with Harding, while Parish plays everything else -- including trombone.

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The cinematic element follows in four consecutive tunes, the suspenseful "Buffalo" contains a buried-in-the-mix chanted choral vocal with a full band, and "Kireru" is delivered via three keyboards playing oscillated drones that open onto church-like passages, as Hogg's spiky guitar adds a layered, trebly spaghetti western feel. Parish takes it solo on piano and electronics for "Le Passé Devant Nous" and "Carver's House." The former is a minimal sketch whose elemental white noise is as much a part of its structure as the inquisitive keys; the latter's skeletal piano is answered by field recordings and a rhythm created from an unidentifiable sample. For all its moodiness, Bird Dog Dante closes on the sunny tip with the hooky, lo-fi pop of "The First Star," with its earworm chorus and striated vocal harmonies between Parish and keyboardist Marta Collica. While it's unlikely that Bird Dog Dante will win him many new fans, its curious, intimate, casual approach will certainly appeal to those who have embraced Parish's earlier -- and no less idiosyncratic -- recordings. ---Thom Jurek, AllMusic Review

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