



Cormac O' Caoimh
Start a Spark

CD Review



Cormac O' Caoimh Start A Spark

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by Squibs
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It's no secret that I generally sleep by the letterbox when I know there's a new Cormac O'Caoimh release coming in the mail. Start a Spark landed on my head the other morning, the bubble wrap saving me from injury. The packaging is sleek and tasteful, with moody distorted photographs of Cormac, somewhat reminiscent of a Cure album circa 1982. The inside sleeve contains lyrics - great tracts of lyrics in a stream-of-consciousness printout punctuated only by song titles.

As usual, Cormac writes and performs all songs on acoustic guitar. This time out, he's got a new backing band. Jason O'Driscoll is on drums, on bass is Jason O'Driscoll, and on electric guitar we have, well, Jason O'Driscoll. And last but not least, we have the lovely Aoife Regan on backing vocals.

"**Start a Spark**" and "Lazy Gazing" open the album. Both are up-tempo numbers with solid memorable progressions and both are potential singles. In fact, "Lazy Gazing" has 'Summer radio hit' written all over it. "Deep Sea Diving" is worthy of special mention for its eclectic lyrics about somebody who's too busy feeling sorry for themselves to pick themselves up and dust themselves off. Cormac relies on marine imagery to carry the message: "No-one's going to notice your tears if they fall in the sea's salty waters/Your sky is falling/But you don't notice 'cos you're diving too deep".

"**Ghosts**" makes me smile every time I listen. I spent several days racking my brain to remember what song it reminded me of, before having a "D'Oh!" epiphany. I had been thinking of "December in Monaco" from Cormac's old band, The Citadels. "Ghosts" is an evocative, fragile lullaby and Aoife's dulcet backing vocals massage the eardrums: "I'll count the stars and wish to find out where you are". It's a lazy Sunday-afternoon-duvet-on-the-sofa song.

"**Things Will Get**" is not a song I would have selected as one of my favourites, but it's undeniably catchy and the tune is continually popping, unbidden, into my head. "This Heart" sees Aoife and Jason holding Cormac by the ankles as he struggles to reach down and grasp the low, low notes. In fairness, he hits them, but it sounds like hard work. "View of the World" brings to mind Elvis Costello when he was still young and angry, and "Miles of Sky" sounds a lot like Tom Robinson.

The album closes with "If you Feel" - a melodic little pop-jazz duet featuring Cormac and Aoife, with a very catchy progression. Lyrically it's a charming little sentimental love song in the mode of Bill Withers "Lean on Me".

There are telltale hints that this is a small-budget production. On some tracks, the electric guitar has a hint of nasty "fizz" to it, and there are some acoustic fret squeaks which should probably have been tamed a little. There is the occasional delay or phaser effect that's been slightly overcooked and Cormac's pitching and diction are occasionally flawed, but these blemishes add to the charm and the production is generally excellent.

The album is a logical progression for Cormac. It's more mature, more introspective, more self-assured. The lyrics are enigmatic. On the face of it, they are simpler than previous offerings, but after repeated listens you begin to plumb the hidden depths. This album grows on you like a virulent rash. Like its predecessors, this album is going from the review stack to my personal collection.

www.thecitadels.net/cormac

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