



Sound of Yell

'Brocken Spectre'

'El Hombre Trajeado co-founder and erstwhile Arab Strap and RM Hubbert collaborator Stevie Jones takes the spotlight with mesmerising collective of his very own'.

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His versatility and fluency across several instruments place him among the most sought-after collaborators in Scottish music, but with his alchemical debut album under the monicker Sound Of Yell Stevie Jones steps out of the wings into centre-stage. Herein lies a series of routes paved with genres with which Jones has a long and fecund history – acoustic psychedelia, folk, jazz, improvisation – yet so sinuous, interwoven and undulating as to leave the listener at liberty to choose their own pace and terminus.

Brocken Spectre – named after the immense, halo-crested shadow cast by hill climbers on faraway clouds when backlit by the sun – is the first album on which Jones places his typically participatory ethic aside and assumes responsibility for writing, arranging and producing every note of its eight entirely acoustic songs. Brocken Spectre demands your total surrender the way few records do, so stripped is it of effects and anything other than natural reverb, a bold and extreme approach that adds an uncommon vividness to the music.

Jones' corralling of the talents of around a dozen musicians with whom he has previously worked – including Stevie Jackson (Belle And Sebastian; here playing harmonica), Norman Blake (Teenage Fanclub; vocals), Alex Neilson (Trembling Bells; drums and percussion), Aby Vuillamy (musical saw, vocals) and sound artist Kim Moore (who plays viola and sings Brocken Spectre's sole lyric on Caiman) – exhibits a confidence born of adventurism and tenacity. The results are irresistible, ebbing and flowing like the swell of the ocean.

The unifying thread that runs through Brocken Spectre's motley collages – a feast of flute, violin, cello, woodwind, Neilson's rhythmic restlessness, hurdy gurdy (played by Jones' longtime sparring partner Alasdair Roberts) and more – is Jones' eloquent fingerstyle acoustic guitar playing, for too long the understudy to his better-known skills on both electric and acoustic bass with such artists as Roberts, Aidan Moffat (Jones was a key player on Moffat and Bill Wells' landmark Everything Is Getting Older record) and El Hombre Trajeado, of whom he is a founder alongside fellow Chemikal Underground signing RM Hubbert.

Illustrative of Jones' dexterity, chordal intelligence and melodic innovation is Iguacu, written following a voyage to the national park and waterfalls in Brazil while visiting his expat friend and fellow fingerstyle guitar player Chris Mack. The descending chords of the song's central motif first appear unclothed, slowly gathering a thin layer of piano; then, on their return, a wordless blanket of sung harmonies. Finally, the many coats that comprise Iguacu are methodically subtracted to leave a wisp of sound that ultimately evaporates.

While such moments of pulchritude are sprinkled throughout, within Brocken Spectre lie countless other merits, not least unpredictability, illusion, purity, looseness, generosity and mischief. At once invigorating and soothing, Brocken Spectre announces the arrival of a mesmerising new force piloted by the supremely gifted Stevie Jones.

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