



BENJAMIN FRANCIS LEFTWICH

The first thing you notice is the voice. Haunting and sublimely other-worldly, it stops you in your tracks with the gentlest of touches, proving that sometimes the intoxicating simplicity of a single voice is all you need to make an impact. With Benjamin Francis Leftwich, that hypnotic, breathy voice is the reason for it all. It exposes his soul before anyone even hears the lyrics, letting the listener in to Benjamin's most intimate world in a way no interview or video ever could. It is the essence of his being, laid bare without regret for us to share. Not just your average singer-songwriter then.

Indeed, there's nothing ordinary about this startling new talent, who is just 21 and has yet to release his first album but who sounds like he already has a lifetime of experiences, hopes and shattered dreams invested in each song. He has, in fact, been waiting for this moment for years. At the age of 10, Yorkshire born Benjamin first started playing guitar, ditching his teacher after just a couple of lessons and teaching himself from the records that inspired him instead. Growing up on a diet of Rolling Stones and Nina Simone, Benjamin discovered Bob Dylan and Elliot Smith in his teens and never looked back. By 15, he was writing songs and playing with a band on the York music scene, before starting work as a solo artist at 18 and beginning to write what now makes up his forthcoming debut album 'Last Smoke Before The Snowstorm'.

"A lot of the songs on there I wrote when I was about 17 or 18," Benjamin confirms. "I really wanted to get their sound right and I'm a bit of a perfectionist when it comes to writing and recording. I've been working on them ever since really."

The breathtaking results were well worth waiting for. Inspired by the likes of Ryan Adams, Bruce Springsteen, Arcade Fire and Sigur Ros, Benjamin took his time creating a sound that is truly his, that reveals a little more of himself with every single breath and moment. It's a sound that gives him the confidence to label himself simply, unpretentiously, as a singer-songwriter, untroubled by the confusingly negative connotations the term now seems associated with.

"That's what I am," he shrugs. "I don't think I'm folk, nor am I straight indie. I write songs and I play guitar and I think it's varied on the album and it will be in the future. That's what I feel like I'm making. The title singer-songwriter is appropriate. The term is usually applied to people like James Morrison and James Blunt, but really they play down-the-line pop. It's people like Elliot Smith, Bob Dylan and John Lennon that can be considered true singer-songwriters."

Unsurprisingly then, it made sense that Benjamin would release his material under his own full name. No gimmicks, no clever pseudonyms. This is him. Pure and simple.

"A couple of people seem to have an issue with it but it doesn't bother me.

There was one journalist who spent the whole interview expecting me to be an army major with a monocle because of my name. Obviously, I'm not."

Name obsessive's aside, Benjamin has already been stunned by the reaction to the material he has released so far, which has truly taken him by surprise. After releasing his debut EP 'A Million Miles Out' at the end of 2010, he quickly found himself on the most prestigious playlists around as Radio 1 DJs Zane Lowe and Fearne Cotton fell for Benjamin's assuming charms. He was also added to XFM's Evening Playlist, while Jo Whiley made Benjamin's track 'Atlas Hands' one of her Tracks of 2010 and he was also asked to record a live session for



Radio 2's Dermot O'Leary. Benjamin's version of 'Rebellion' by Arcade Fire has since been downloaded over 100,000 times.

On 6th March 2011 Benjamin's stunning second EP, 'Pictures', was released. This led to a tour support slot with Noah & The Whale, while the lead track from the EP was made 'Hottest Record In The World' on Zane Lowe's radio show and added to the Radio 1 'In New Music We Trust' playlist.

On July 4th, at long last, Benjamin's debut album 'Last Smoke Before The Snowstorm' was released going top 20 in the UK album chart. It was preceded by his first single proper 'Box of Stones', which Radio 1 DJ Greg James chose as his 'Record Of The Week'. Typically understated, it paired the fragile elegance of Benjamin's stunning voice with simple, inviting guitar lines, heart-breakingly delicate melodies and lyrics strained with emotion and was play listed by Radio 1

"A couple of people have described some of my songs as love songs but there's a level of ambiguity in them I think. I try not to ever focus on a central theme. I just bring together inspiration from around me and put it all into a song. Some songs are more direct, but there's always that level of ambiguity."

That summer Ben played a total of 26 festivals in the UK including, Glastonbury, Reading & Leeds, Green Man, Bestival, Camp Bestival and many more. In October 2011 Ben embarked on a massive 28 date sold out UK tour, and in November announced he would be playing a handful of headline full band shows in February in the UK. This would include a date at the prestigious Shepherd's Bush Empire in London.

'Pictures' was released on February 20th as a single, going onto the 'B' list at Radio 1 at prompting Fearne Cotton to invite Ben into the Radio 1 Live Lounge. He also performed a live session on BBC6 Music for Marc Riley and XFM for Mary-Anne Hobbs the same week. XFM added the single to their Daytime Playlist and Q Radio to their 'A' list. The video has achieved around 900k plays on youtube.

Following on from this success he has just announced a gargantuan 30 date headline tour of the UK, the largest consecutive running tour announced in the UK in 2012. This tour will commence on October 1st 2012.

There is at least one thing that seems certain . By the end of year, many, many more people will stumble upon a new singer-songwriter to believe in when they're stopped in their tracks by Benjamin's startlingly intimate voice. The unmistakable sound of this year's most intriguing new talent.



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