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LA PRIEST (UK)

«Inji» (Domino, Release: 26.06.2015)



***Inji* is the debut solo album by Sam Dust, AKA LA Priest. *Inji* reasserts Dust as a truly idiosyncratic voice in British music, applying the same frantically eclectic, mischievous and wilfully absurd spirit of his previous band, the beloved *Late of the Pier*, to ever more nuanced and affecting songwriting and composition.**

Just like its genesis story, *Inji* is a record that poses as many questions as answers. It has its own logic, in its own time zone, and for the duration of its forty four minutes the listener shares in this too. If it doesn't conform it's because it's not supposed to.

Although *Fantasy Black Channel*, *Late of the Pier*'s debut, and only, full-length album was released in 2009, the material which comprised it actually dated back to as early as 2004 when a 15 year old Dust first started experimenting with his music obsessive father's extensive collection of vintage and bespoke equipment in the attic of their family house in the midlands. Working methodically and in isolation in this way, away from a major city and its attendant distractions, pressure and trends, Dust was able to develop a sound that could stake a claim to genuine originality - if purely for the sheer scale and scope of its eclecticism.

Quite fittingly for a band who made an art-form of such glorious mayhem, *Late of the Pier* came to an end just as their star was really starting to ascend. A stand-alone double single, "Best In The Class / Blueberry", was released at the end of a gruelling touring period in 2010 and then Dust, and his band-mates Sam Potter, Andrew Faley and Ross Dawson, scattered - leaving the future of the band in doubt.

True to form, Dust vanished particularly dramatically in the intermittent five years up to now, leaving precious few clues to sate the appetite of the super-fans who set up a forum to establish his whereabouts and even at one point got the subject trending nationally on social media. A series of wild rumours, unfounded conjecture, half-true hearsay and wishful thinking trickled out in the first few years but Eastgate remained quiet until it was probably reasonable to assume he'd disappeared for good.

At this point, it's probably appropriate to state that I am a member of the A&R team responsible for bringing Dust to Domino and the forthcoming release of *Inji*, and in writing this biography I had to ask him myself because, despite having known that something was happening for the last 18 months or so, the communication with Dust was so sporadic and scattered that it made knowing the actual state of play in any certainty basically impossible. It was only when the ten final tracks of the album were presented, ready to be mixed by David Wrench in north Wales in the Autumn of last year, that we knew a record was going to be a definite reality. Everything before around the start of 2014 remained a total mystery.

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"So, what shall we say you've been doing for the last five years, Sam?"

"I think that the story should be basically the truth, which is that I'm this musical techno-hermit who doesn't have a watch but has 30 synthesizers and a 4 track in a nice place in the mountains," says Dust. "Can we just say that I forgot about time and that I did loads of stuff but I didn't really care about social media or "internetising" what I was doing...but I did do loads of things, I played gigs, recorded and produced several records, travelled the world, built drum machines, and synthesizers and new inventions, then moved to Wales and released some music and decided to put it on the internet."

Whether or not all of those records, not to mention the new inventions, will ever be shared with the world remains to be seen but what we do have is the ten surreal love songs of *Inji* - a record that, for all Dust's globe-trotting over the last few years - sounds like it could just as easily be the product of that same intense, hermit single-mindedness and dedication to craft, regardless of the ticking of time, that eventually produced *Fantasy Black Channel*.

From the obscene space-age stadium rock guitar solo of "Oino", the maddeningly catchy digi-dub single that Dust leaked sample-by-sample on a suitably enigmatic website at the turn of the year, to "Learning To Love", the record's gargantuan, eight minute long prog-house centrepiece and "Occasion", a melting martian Prince come-on, *Inji* confounds and delights in equal measure and at every turn.

"Lady's In Trouble With The Law" boasts a lithe, sensual soul chorus about getting arrested that feels at once haunted and horny whilst the insectoid instrumental ambience of "Lorry Park", twists and turns and burrows into the brain as creepily as the most classic Aphex Twin material. Elsewhere, "Fabby", another instrumental, juxtaposes a gorgeous, cascading piano figure that'd make Benjamin Britten proud with percussion that sounds like the clashing of two swords and album closer, the bubbling, aquamarine ballad "Mountain" finds Dust contorting his voice into an impossibly high, androgynous falsetto.

Throughout all the songs there's a reliance on feeling and intimation as opposed to any one lyrical theme, and although the notion of love, its joys and trials, heaviness and absurdity, can often be glimpsed, it's in a non-linear way that recalls the disruptive, deliberately misleading pop of artists such as David Sylvian, Arthur Russell and David Byrne. So when Dust opines "was I born to love you?" on "Mountain", it's just as likely to be about the titular mountain, or his dog, or the entire world itself, or nothing at all as it is any real object of romantic affection.

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