

Dan Reeder and This New Century

When Oh Boy Records released Dan Reeder's self-titled album on March 16th, 2004, a somewhat select group of wildly imaginative isolates found cause to celebrate. The album had a special significance to those who might be labeled as lonely daydreamers, but it was Dan's imagination and humor that allowed everyone to enjoy his art.

From the individuals who see the world through a Reeder-esque lens to those who might have more extroverted sensibilities, there's something universal about Dan's music. On his debut release, Dan strikes a common chord by including a song that contains one simple phrase: *"I've got all the fuckin' work I need"*. That repeated declaration dances playfully with an intentionally sparse arrangement of a lonely handclap. It's this simple, blunt sensibility that makes Dan's music so accessible and, conversely, what makes him such a recluse.

He doesn't tour often, records alone in a makeshift studio, plays with homemade instruments and many times can be irritated by some of the minor bumps in the road of humanity – just listen to "Waiting for my cappuccino" from *Sweetheart*, Dan's second release (September 12th, 2006) and you'll get the gist. Ken Tucker, Editor-At-Large for Entertainment Weekly and music critic for NPR's Fresh Air, wrote this after *Sweetheart's* release:

"In a world where most pop culture is about finding out what the maximum number of people desire and then manufacturing something that will max-out that desire till you puke, Reeder's quiet, sharp-witted, literally home-made music reminds you why some people create: to satisfy themselves, and then, if possible, make some money in the bargain."

After glancing over the song titles from Dan's previous two records, one can gather that Dan does not shy away from taboo. "Food and pussy," "Pussy titty" and "Pussy heaven" all seem to have a reoccurring theme, and the heterosexual male quotient of Dan's audience loves him because he says the things they think about ninety-nine percent of the time without reservation.

However, on ***This New Century***, releasing on February 16th, 2010, Reeder mostly forgets man's carnal desire to muse for other higher level, existential dilemmas.

The issue of mortality frequently appears throughout the album. Tracks like "James Brown is dead and gone," "When" and "Angels may" serve as reminders of the unanswerable destiny we all face. Although, in typical Dan Reeder style, "Angels may" is not without the humorous expression of the things you would never expect angels to do:

"They may laugh and they may tease you / And, they may take you by the hand / And on a good day, they may feed you ravioli right out of the can"

As a side note, Dan must really love stuffed pasta, as "The weather is a dead man" on ***This New Century*** features a new weapon in his handcrafted instrument arsenal: a ravioli can guitar that sounds more like a gritty back-alley sitar.

"Bitch Nation" sets out to make a statement about the uncaring ineptitude of a certain new generation. *"She hears the rumors of famines and wars as she sleeps with the TV on."* It's this brand of songwriting that makes ***This New Century*** a new chapter in Dan's recording career as opposed to an extension of his previous material.

Sonically, ***This New Century*** is Dan's most polished effort, complete with his signature style of multi-tracked harmonies with himself and homemade instruments, but Reeder paid a little more attention to detail with the recording technique and his lyrical craftsmanship. One gets the sense that Reeder wanted to make a more serious record, without sacrificing a certain element of tongue-in-cheek wit that is synonymous with his songwriting.

This New Century continues the tradition of imagination, humor and honesty that drove John Prine to sign Dan after receiving a demo version of his first record, and it's a stunning album that his merry band of isolates can enjoy with everyone else or all by themselves.