

Mp3 Ben Schaefer - The Upstairs Choir



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An honest and youthful approach to contemporary folk music. With bare-boned lyrics and an ear for melody Ben Schaefer is a welcomed addition to the collective singer-songwriter voice. 9 MP3 Songs

FOLK: Folk Pop, ROCK: Acoustic Details: With his crisp voice and cunningly beautiful instrumentation, Ben Schaefer, an upcoming singer-songwriter from Rochester, New York, breaks into the music scene with his new independent release *The Upstairs Choir*. The album, with its sensitive yet remarkable variation in style, is a testimony to the unique talents of this self-taught musician. The guitar, piano, and mountain dulcimer weave together harmoniously throughout the tracks in a sophisticated composition of complementation and distinction. The second track on the record, *Mexico*, brings a solo guitar into casual flirtation with the dulcimer's upbeat energy, supporting the musings of the dulcimer and experimenting with the interplay between the distinctive sounds of the two stringed instruments. The more subdued *Northern Parade* brings the soft, powerful, and clean feeling of Ben's piano playing into contact with a subtle yet spirited soliloquy performed by fiddler, Leah Shraeder. The tracks represent a valuable contribution to the singer-songwriter community, as they highlight and optimize on the unique voices latent within the strings of these instruments. In his lyrics Ben seeks to tackle subjects with a level of raw honesty unparalleled by most. His philosophy is in keeping with some words of wisdom from one of his musical inspirations and influences, Canadian singer-songwriter, Emm Gryner, "She told me that as an artist you can't censor yourself from your audience because in doing so you prevent any honesty from being conveyed." The record seeks to openly deal with issues of pervasive sexuality and alcohol use in relationships, struggles challenging the upcoming generation and seen by Ben during his first two years at college where, as he puts it, sexuality is so pervasive at times that it can be oppressive. The song *Desperado*, named after a popular French drink, confronts this issue and brings to the fore the struggle of

confusing romantic fulfillment with intoxication. The name of the album is an allusion to a song by musician Joni Mitchell, one of Ben's greatest influences. It was she that inspired him, when traveling to France for study, to leave the weightier instruments behind in the States and to solely take with him his mountain dulcimer, thereby forcing him to tackle its strings and foster a relationship with its sounds. "I don't technically know how to play the dulcimer," Ben laughs, "I don't technically know how to play anything." Diligence, an excellent ear, and a passion for the soul conveyed through music have helped to craft his talent into the articulate and refined instrumentation displayed on The Upstairs Choir. Growing up in the suburbs of Rochester, New York, Ben only began to tap into his musicality in high school when, after a failed attempt in his younger years at piano, he took up the guitar and fell in love with folk music and the creative phrasing and confessional storytelling of Mitchell's Ladies of the Canyon, "I had never heard anything like her music. There's so much soul in her voice and the songs on that record in particular cover so many different approaches to lyric writing." His passion for the creation of music solidified upon forming an acquaintance with Gryner, who inspired and helped focus his musical goals and philosophy of song. Upon entering Bard College, in New York State's Hudson Valley, Ben again confronted the piano, this time with a greater feel and understanding of music which allowed him to forge the more expressive relationship with the instrument that contributes to the musical sophistication and variety heard on The Upstairs Choir. -Caitlyn Cook 2005

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