



21st Century Schizoid (Blues) Man

Words | Bonzo Slater

Simon Campbell is a blues guitarist with something of a dilemma. You see, he isn't really a blues guitarist at all. Which given he was nominated for two National Blues Awards for his debut solo album "ThirtySix" and has graced many a blues stage since with the likes of such talents as Davy Knowles, presents him with a slight PR pickle.

But Simon has never been one to be boxed in by journalistic convenience. In nearly 40 years before the musical mast, he's done pretty much most things an axeman can do. That hasn't however seen him rest upon his many laurels, with his move to the Island giving him a creative Indian Spring that looks all set to turn into a long hot summer.

From his small beginnings as a young guitarslinger in Ramsbottom armed with his beloved Flying V, this fellagh went on to take care of a lot of business. Serving his apprenticeship with hard rockers Whitefire (fitting in a degree in Chemistry at Salford in his spare time), he then tasted the high life as part of Europop combo Little Brother, signing to Polydor for a cool half a million pounds. Their sole album "Survivor" (co-produced by the legendary Big Jim Sullivan) went down very well in Europe, with Simon still receiving royalty cheques to this day. The band's break-up saw him going back to his rockist roots as part of The Method along with ex-10CC drummer Mick Gilbourne and Sad Cafe's Mike Hehir, spending the next couple of years touring extensively in the UK and Europe. He then found himself part of the indie scene, joining The Disciples with Rick Downson and Millhouse combining much touring with also releasing a mini-album much praised by amongst others Q Magazine.



As sometimes happens, a period of “normal life” followed with Simon founding the web design house Erskine Design but all the while there was both live and recording session work. 2008 saw La Famille Campbell seduced by the charms of Ellan Vannin, coming over for Simon and wife Angela to supposedly enjoy a pleasant semi-retirement by the shores of Port St. Mary. Well, that was the plan.

Falling into the company of many Manx musicians made Simon realise he should pick up his guitar again and give it a damn good thrashing (in the nicest of ways). With the able assistance of his partners in crime The Very Very Bad Men, Simon was able to give full vent to his blues inclinations, leading to the release in 2011 of his critically acclaimed solo album “ThirtySix”. And thus the stereotype was struck. Bloke in early 50s...plays blues...must be a bluesman then. Well yes, and also quite decidedly, no.

The follow-up album “Broken Hearted” (to be released next spring), sees him not only skipping merrily betwixt genres but also showing his light and dark sides with one side acoustic and the other electric. But even then it isn't quite that simple. Acoustic tracks like “The Knife”'s Cohen-esque tale of the cold tragedy of a transvestite murder show how light can cast shadows, just as the electric “The Man” with its echoes of Neil Young brings it forth from the darkness of unrequited love. This album certainly shows that Simon is no mean lyricist either.

And if that wasn't all, he is plotting that most curious thing for a guitarist, an electronic music EP. Working with Island synth boffins Danny Kneale and Andy Otten, don't be surprised if Simon changes his spots all over again.

The past they say is another country. For Simon Campbell the future is the World.

See more about Simon on the interweb : www.simoncampell.com

