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Danny Michel: Songs to Make Your Ears Smile

Tod Hardin · Tuesday, October 22nd, 2013

[Danny Michel](#) is surely a name that most of you have never heard. I hadn't until recently, but I'm so damn thankful now that I have, as it's resulted in the discovery of a new catalog of meaningful music that I'll value for a very long time. My ears are smiling.

This Canadian multi-instrumentalist, singer/songwriter, and producer, has been at it for over 20 years. He's released several albums, been nominated for three Juno Awards (the Canadian equivalent of an Emmy), and has received massive amounts of critical acclaim – including for his current album, *Black Birds Are Dancing Over Me*, which legendary music journalist, Larry LeBlanc said this of: “One of the finest musical works of our time. This is a career album.” Those are some pretty heavy words, but those coming from a highly respected man that has covered the music industry for over 50 years, including 16 as the Canadian bureau chief for Billboard Magazine.

I'll leave it up to you to determine how accurate Mr. LeBlanc's evaluation is. For now, if you haven't in the past, discover the sounds of Danny Michel by enjoying videos for two tracks off of the new album – *Sad and Beautiful World* and *This Is What Is* – and by reading his responses to several questions of mine, which he was gracious enough to answer while driving through the Canadian Rockies into the breathtaking world that is Banff National Park.

Tod Hardin: How would you define your sound if Don Was called you up and asked you to?

Danny Michel: Oh that's so hard it answer. I don't have a particular sound, I hope. I write songs and try to make people think.

TH: “Undiscovered” and “Criminally overlooked”... just a couple of many similar references that I've seen in relation to you as an artist. Do comments like that frustrate you? Does it ever hinder your ability and/or desire to produce your art?

DM: I never think about it. I'd do what I do if you left me alone on a desert island. Maybe the world is an unfair place ... and how can anyone judge art anyway? I make music for me and I've worked hard to carve out my little career. I'm very happy.

TH: Some have compared you to Paul Simon and Elvis Costello. Great company to be in, but for you, who has inspired and influenced you?

DM: The older I get the less a fan of groups I am as much as songs. But I grew up listening to the Clash, Paul Simon, Bowie, Marley. Kind of everything. I loved Cat Stevens and Public Enemy.

TH: You've been traveling to Belize for the past 15 years. You eventually came across some pretty amazing musicians there, right?

DM: I made my last album there with one of the country's most well known bands called *The Garifuna Collective*. I was a fan of their music and approached them about making an album together. We just finished a seven week summer tour of North America.

TH: You obviously have developed a deep love for Belize and its people – as evidenced by the fact that you have started a foundation there to support youth education. What can you tell us about that?

DM: I started working with a school there called the Caye Caulker Ocean Academy. My fund helps raise tuition money for students that are struggling. To date we've raised about \$55,000.000. If you go to my website there is lots of fun stuff about that. It was something I felt I wanted to do to give something back after all the times I've enjoyed myself there.

TH: You've been told that you must spend the next 5 years on a deserted island. You have 90 seconds to grab one album from each of these genres: rock, folk, blues, jazz, R&B/Soul. Which ones do you take?

DM: Oh, that's impossible. Maybe I'd enjoy the silence or I'd take something mellow. Maybe a Cat Stevens album.

TH: What's next for you and your music?

DM: Not sure. This is always the most exciting time. I'm taking some time off and thinking about what kind of album I want to make next. Nothing better than a blank canvas.

For show dates and more info on Danny Michel, visit www.dannymichel.com.

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