

Jamie Cullum Interview

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It's always exciting when your job brings you into some kind of contact with artists you admire, listen to, or are interested in finding out more about. Although I've only watched Jamie Cullum on the TV before now, he's certainly an artist who's sparked my interest, but how would it be when he, instead of his piano did the talking. Only one way to find out!

1. Hi Jamie, welcome to Music.co.uk. I'd like to start by asking how you would describe your musical journey up to this, your fifth album release. When you started out, did you think you'd reach this point?

I guess I didn't really think I would ever reach this point. My goals are really as a musician, so when I started playing it was mainly for the joy of playing and the thrill that gave me. My goals are more, I would like to play with this person/I would maybe like to play a gig here, I would like to be able to play this song/to start bringing in this kind of technique into my music. So that was really it! When I started making albums they were to see how I sounded more than anything, so it was a great surprise to me to get signed, and the success I achieved, particularly with Twenty-something, took me massively by surprise. I think it's interesting, because once you get that taste of success, in the sense of lots of people hearing your record, it does make you hungrier for that. I guess I'm naturally defensive about it, because I didn't start from that point of view. I think that when you do taste a bit of success, it's quite amazing and inspires you to greater heights.

In summary to the question, I think I started out as somebody who just wanted to be a good musician, and I don't think that's changed; but it's also great that people are listening to what I do, and I want to continue with that as well.

2. Do you think more busy/big name artists would benefit from taking time out from the media/touring frenzy like you have?

I don't know whether taking time out would work for every artist, but what I knew is when I finished touring *Catching Tales* after about two years, I needed to take some time out, really more to process everything that had happened to me. With the amount of travelling I had done, and the amount of music I had played, it was a sensory overload. I just think I needed to allow my creative brain time to be able to produce something that was really special again. I feel had I gone straight into recording I would have either been overly experimental, or maybe too similar to what I had done before. So I allowed myself the time to make something that was relevant, but still in line with what I had been doing before. I think it can be unhealthy to be in the spotlight for too long, and it's good to remind yourself what real life is like.

3. Are you more knowledgeable about technology now you have your own studio, or do you still feel 'terrified' by it?

Setting up a studio was one of the best things I have done, in terms of throwing myself into the deep end, and learning more about how a studio works. It gives you a greater respect for the studio process, and it also allowed me to experiment in my own

time, without feeling that I needed to have other people there all the time. I could go into the studio and try out a drum beat, a drum loop, a keyboard or a guitar sound, really mess around with the arrangements of the songs. It really allows you to be more experimental in your own time, really bring it into the music that you're doing when you're a bit more educated. So I am a lot less terrified by it now.....

4. I've seen a few videos of you performing on Strictly Come Dancing and Dancing with the stars, have you ever been tempted to have a go at something like that yourself?

The answer to that is no. I'm a terrible dancer. I only really dance when I'm drunk and I'm even worse than usual. The idea of being on something like 'Strictly Come Dancing' fills me with total abject terror!

5. Would you say experimentation is the key to keeping your work fresh and interesting? Given that your songs have been written/recorded in several different ways?

Experimentation is one of the very many ingredients to keep your work fresh. You can experiment to the point where it doesn't come productive, so it's important to experiment, but then extract the best things out of it. You need a good editor, and if you can't edit it yourself then you need a great producer to help you do that. There are a lot of ways of keeping your work fresh; playing and working with interesting people that challenge you is another way. On this album, I worked a lot of different ways to record the songs. I worked at home, in Los Angeles, my studio, my kitchen, other people's studios, and with many different musicians. Some of the songs took three or four versions before I got it right, and I think it's all resulted in a sound that's fresher than anything I've done for a while.

6. What can you tell us about your involvement in next year's Cheltenham Jazz Festival? Is this the sort of thing you'd like to be more involved with in the future?

I was really honoured to be involved in the Cheltenham Jazz Festival. I think it's an amazing festival, which has always had incredible music. I've gone there a lot as well as played there, just to see music. It allowed me to name some artists that maybe they'd not thought of, that I've seen on my travels, artists which the producers of Cheltenham hadn't seen or heard of. It's a great opportunity, and it means I get to help make a festival that I would really want to go to. It's a very exciting thing to do, and I would love to do more of it in the future.

7. What experiences can you share with us from your time travelling? Is there anywhere still on your hit list to visit?

I think it's fair to say I've been to most places in the last few years- from Australia to New Zealand, to South Africa, through Asia, America, South America, Canada, and Europe. I even did gigs in Russia before I signed my deal, so I've been to some amazing places to play. The main thing I've learnt is that music can really touch people, whatever language they speak in, whatever their culture is. The universal appeal of music when it's done from the heart is an amazing power. That's one thing I've learnt. I guess the experiences are too many to go into, but basically going on a

world tour is like going to a different party every night. It's pretty knacker and amazing (mostly stories I couldn't possibly recount to you)

8. Apart from 'Mixtapes', are there any other things from 'back in the day' or even 'modern day' that you find romantic?

Sure, many things. Romance is everywhere, but mix tapes are the best way!

9. How would you like to see Britain, and specifically music represented at the 2012 Olympic ceremonies?

I heard a rumour that Damon Albarn was in the running for doing this, as the creative director. I think this a brilliant idea! Apart from being a massive fan of Damon Albarn, I think that his creative mind is so interesting, and so modern/cool/up to date with what Britain is all about. He has such a great knowledge of musical cultures, and he would really know how to put together a ceremony that was British, but also wrapped its arms around the world, so I would love to see him do that.

10. One fan of yours wanted to ask, what did you think of the Marc Jacobs show you recently attended at Paris Fashion Week?

I've not really been to anything like that before, it was totally amazing, and outside my general understanding, but it was great fun!

12. Another fan question came through about your new band, and what it's like to work with them. Did you have any difficulties or challenges with the bands dynamics?

It's always interesting, exciting, and frightening to work with new musicians. When you've worked with the same people for a long time you get into a certain comfort zone, which can be both brilliant and dangerous to your creativity. For me, using a new band on this album and tour was about changing my position within the music, so I felt I was more in the position of the new boss. It made me look at the music differently, and it makes me direct the band differently. I think it's been really positive, and has brought a new energy to the music which really excites me. In terms of the band's dynamics, it's all about knowing what you want, and knowing how to get it. That can only come from playing together, we've been doing that a lot recently and it's yielding incredible results, so I'm really excited about touring with them soon.

13. Have there been any press headlines (accurate or otherwise) that have amused you? And is there any you wouldn't mind reading about yourself?

I try to avoid press stories about me, not even on purpose, I just don't tend to engage in the media that writes press headlines about me. It's better for your health to do that, and is very unhealthy to read about yourself too much.

I remember reading about some girl I was meant to be having an affair with five years ago, a town that I had never been to, and someone that I had never met, so I thought that was quite interesting. They devoted a whole page to that which was pretty funny!

14. Tell us something not many people know about Jamie Cullum?

I'm freakishly good at high jump, despite being quite short. I can jump extremely high, so I guarantee not many people, apart from those who went to school with me would know that.

15. Finally do you have a message for all the music.co.uk readers, and Jamie Cullum fans that will be reading this interview soon?

I hope you enjoy the new album, I'm very proud of it, and I think you're going to like it too. So enjoy it, and make sure you come out and see us on tour, because it's going to be a blast.

Music.co.uk is a great website and keep reading it because it's one of the good ones.

For all tour dates please visit <http://www.jamiecullum.com>