

It is easy to perceive Chris Garneau's new record *El Radio* as a dramatic seasonal change, an event horizon, perhaps a carnival or even a birthday. It's that way for the best of records: the ones that change from pieces of plastic and wax into something that penetrate the heart and the mind. There's a twinkle in the eye of this young Brooklyn songwriter and more than a bit of magic in that vulnerable yet brave voice of his, floating above us all yet tethered by the silky strands of the songs themselves.

Chris' debut album *Music For Tourists* (2007) was sad and sparse and gorgeous, drawing inspiration from Chris' own life for its subject matter. The album found its audience like a migrating colony of butterflies and every week since the album's release, thirty, fifty, hundreds of people have captured it or perhaps been captured by it. When a record finds its audience in this way and those butterflies flutter brightly in all directions and you start seeing blog posts (outside the so-called sphere) and tweets and interview mentions that say, "one of my favorite singers, Chris Garneau," well, it's more satisfying and real and special. In the summer and autumn months that followed, Garneau and friends piled into a van with as many instruments as they could fit and traveled north to New Hampshire to begin creating *El Radio*.

Surrounded by the simplicity of lake and mountains, the intricate process of making an utterly organic record began. The result exceeds all expectations. A rich harmonium and a wave of strings opens the album in "The Leaving Song". Chris describes loss of life as standing in the desert on a warm spring day. A hummingbird lands in the palm of his hand. When it flies off, the metaphor in the song is born. "You have to let them leave and pretend like you don't want to go with them, and you have to pretend this forever," he says. The album's genesis also parallels Garneau's perspective as a songwriter as *El Radio* sees him draw lyrically from sources outside himself and his own experiences to those of other characters, both real and imaginary.

There is still a poignant melancholy and bold sincerity that permeates all of Garneau's music, but those qualities are augmented by a playfulness in his melodies and arrangements. You can hear examples of this in the sublime retro-pop of "Fireflies", the album's incredibly catchy standout first single "No More Pirates", and the deceptively upbeat and Baroque-styled "Dirty Night Clowns" (a song inspired by a true life tale of a child molesting dwarf who'd sneak into homes in the dark of night dressed as a clown). Garneau's extensive cast of characters unavoidably comment on the social and political forces that pull us unpredictably through time while rollicking to the rhythms of an organ grinder.

Countering these plays on life, the ever literal "Hands on the Radio" expresses the nostalgia, empathy and embrace for Juarez, Mexico - a border city fraught with the great despair of its infamy, the unsolved murders of hundreds of women, while remaining a rapidly growing metropolis filled with hope. And "Hometown Girls" is an anthem to an American archetype, in which Garneau watches tumbleweeds blow over the lives of girls whom he wishes we loved more.

This volley of the violent and the whimsical, the sweet and the sinister, the carnival and the funeral, plays throughout the album.

Broadcasting was originally a gardening term referring to the scattering of seeds. This shining new record, *El Radio*, is a thirteen-song radio station that will transmit its seeds all over the planet. Hear them grow.