

LONELY ROBOT

It begun with a robot from an antiques store, the name was known already there. A few years later the first album by the Lonely Robot called Please Come Home is released. We had the fortune to ask the Lonely Robot himself some questions, which is why we can tell you a little more about this band in this little story about this lonely robot who came to earth some time ago or some time in the future.

L O N E L Y R O B O T

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PHOTOS AS INDICATED ON PHOTOS
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For those of you not in the knowing, Lonely Robot is the latest project from multi-instrumentalist and vocalist John Mitchell who is known for his works with Arena, The Urbane, Kino, Frost, It Bites. This is his voyage into his mind and his music, it is called Lonely Robot and the album is called "Please Come Home".

The Lonely Robot idea was born in an antiques store some years ago when John bought the robot knowing that he was going to call his project Lonely Robot long before it was even conceived. The was the obvious inspiration for the cover artwork along with a man out of time and place that can be seen in the rest of the artwork on the album.

- What better way to do that than be photographed wandering round one of the busiest cities in the world in an astronaut suit.

I think that is one way to be out of place and time, an astronaut in a busy town is something that would be seen as a bit strange for passers by even though the photographer would be something of a giveaway indicating that it wasn't a real alien from another place and time.

The name of the band and the album is interesting and the inspiration for those come from outer space, a theory exist on this subject, the Panspermia Theory which dictates that life exist around the universe and is spread through meteorites and such things, some theorise that life on Earth begun that way.

Could the human kind somehow have their origins somewhere out there?

- The inspiration for Lonely Robot - "Please Come Home" was my firm belief that the human species does not originate entirely from Earth!

That is a fascinating idea, and this Lonely Robot is searching for his home or something like that, musically Lonely Robot is not like anything John has done before according to himself, I asked him if it didn't kind of sound like anything he has ever done before but at the same time a bit different from everything he has done.

- People feel most comfortable when they have a frame of reference. Some people have compared it to Kino, others to Frost*, and a few to It Bites. To my mind, none of the trademarks of any of those bands are present, other than my ear for melody and my guitar solos. I stand by what I originally said, John states with a hint of a smile.

Lonely Robot

The Lonely Robot project is something Mitchell had been thinking about for a while but was pushed into by InsideOut man Thomas Waber.

- People had suggested I do an album like this for a long time, but I procrastinated so much that in the end, it took Thomas Waber from InsideOut to push me into doing this.

And he points out that it was a good thing, considering that he had a bit of fun in the studio.

- I can honestly say it's the most fun I've ever had in the studio. That's not to belittle anything

I've done before but with this, I can wake up in the morning with a song idea in my head, write it and have it recorded by the evening.

So with such a different aspect on thing with a process unlike the rest he has done before, what has he learnt during the recording of "Please Come Home?"

- That making music has become fun again for me, and rather reminds me of the way I felt at the age of 16, making songs in my bedroom on a 4 track tape recorder.

There are eleven tracks on the album, our reviewers thought the one about the pale blue dot was the sharpest, but which is the best according to the Robot himself? Does he have a favourite song on the album?

- Yes I do, Lonely Robot. The sentiment behind the lyrics and the chorus sum up the way I spend a lot of the time feeling - that I don't belong.

One Hallowed reviewer could say welcome to the club, but there is a thing I came to think about when asking questions. The word ridiculous that was used in the press sheet for the latest It Bites album like this: "We put the London Symphony Orchestra all over it and made it ridiculous. We wanted to make an album that's better and more ridiculous than the last one (laughs). "Ridiculous" meaning a complete disregard for any preconceived notion of what an It Bites record should sound like." He also explained it like Ridiculous in a good way when I asked him about it in the interview about the album, maybe that can be said here as well I thought but



Lonely Robot isn't ridiculous and he seems to have forgotten all about the It Bites stuff as well.

- The word ridiculous is quite an insulting one in English, and not one I've heard mentioned before in context of the last It Bites album! Are you sure you've got the right word? So - no I don't think Lonely Robot is in any way ridiculous.

Neither do the author of the article, who doesn't think it over the top in the way that It Bites which is why that word might not describe how "Please Come Home" sounds. But the theme is a bit larger than life in a way, but as a sci-fi fan the author of the article likes it.

- The concept is about the way in which some ancient civilisations - for instance, the Mayans, the Egyptians and the Chinese - had technology way beyond what they should have had at the time. And I'm talking about the millennium up to 1000AD. It's as if some people had been transplanted onto the planet from another world and time.

- It represents the human condition. I'm not suggesting that human beings behave like robots, but so many people lead regimented lives and it's easy to get stuck in a rut and not realise or know how to get out of it.

Please Come Home

Even though it may not be ridiculous or over the top in any way, it is still a grand production with some prominent guests and such things. Like a drummer and Marillion vocalist Steve Hogarth performs on two songs in a slightly different role than he is used to.

- Craig Blundell does all the drums. I mapped out all the parts for him in advance, but he brought a lot of his personality to the songs. Steve Hogarth does backing vocals, yes. But his main contribution is playing the piano,

which he does with such a delicate feel.

But Hogarth is not the only going a bit outside his normal working range on this album.

- Throughout, what I wanted to do was to take the guests outside of what they're usually known for. For example, Kim Seviour from Touchstone sings on one track called *Oubliette*, and I got her to do it at the lower end of her vocal register, which she doesn't normally get to use.

But Seviour wasn't the only vocalist complementing John on this album, there are some more acclaimed vocalist lending their voices to the adventure that is "Please Come Home", like Heather Findley and Go West vocalist Peter Cox.

- We duet on a song entitled *Why Do We Stay*, which was actually the first one I wrote for the album. Heather is usually known for her folk style of singing but for this song, I gave her the brief of taking a more Kate Bush approach - breathy and emotive. When you think of Peter, you immediately think of Eighties pop, don't you? But I felt his dusty baritone would suit my track *The Boy in the Radio* perfectly.

Other guests on the album includes Nik Kershaw - guitar, Jem Godfrey of Frost* - keyboard, Nick Beggs - bass and Chapman Stick; and narration by renowned English actor Lee Ingleby.

Ending words

But what about the other things on John Mitchell's agenda, like for instance It Bites. What are the plans for said band? The press sheet indicates that work on a new It Bites album is planned but has been delayed but what about it?

- There are no current plans, John Beck is playing keyboards for Fish on tour, and as I understand it, is about to help Fish

write his next album. Obviously, promoting Lonely Robot is my current focus, and I'm also going on tour with Arena for 6 weeks in March and April across the UK and Europe.

That can be a shame but until we hear something from It Bites we can always enjoy Lonely Robot for a long while still. The album is out now and available on Special Edition Digipak (incl. 3 bonus tracks), 180g 2 LP Gatefold Edition (incl. album on CD) and

Digital Download. Our reviewer bought the 2 LP version and thinks it looks great but don't ask him how it sounds as he haven't played it yet. And with those last pointless facts we end this article and leave the ending to John Mitchell.

- To anybody that has bought Lonely Robot, I hope you enjoyed listening to it as much as I enjoyed making it. And if you haven't bought it, give it a go - you might just like it



The people behind Please Come Home:

Vocals, Guitar, Bass, Keyboards - John Mitchell

Drums - Craig Blundell

Additional Bass - Nick Beggs

Guests on the album:

Peter Cox, Jamie Finch, Heather Findlay, Jem Godfrey, Steve Hogarth,

Lee Ingleby, Nik Kershaw, Rebecca Neew-Menear and Kim Seviour

Tracklist:

1. Airlock
2. God vs Man
3. The Boy In The Radio
4. Why Do We Stay?
5. Lonely Robot
6. A Godless Sea
7. Oubliette
8. Construct/Obstruct
9. Are We Copies?
10. Human Being
11. The Red Balloon

John Mitchell Discography

With It Bites

The Tall Ships (2008)

Map Of The Past (2012)

With Frost

Milliontown (2006)

Experiments In Mass Appeal (2008)

With Kino Picture (2005)

With Arena

The Visitor (1998)

Immortal? (2000)

Contagion (2003)

Pepper's Ghost (2005)

The Seventh Degree Of Separation (2011)

With The Urbane

Neon (1999)

Glitter (2003)

... and a little additional reading:

Our review of Lonely Robot - Please Come Home

Our review of It Bites - Map of the Past

Article from a previous interview with It Bites