

Adem

'Love and other planets'

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'**Love and other planets**', the second album from Adem, sees the London singer-songwriter taking the rule-book of contemporary folk he helped to write and systematically pulling it apart page by page. Upping the ante in terms of sonics and songwriting ambition, Adem has written a far-reaching and beautiful record, bound together by a truly universal concept.

Space dominates 'Love and other planets', just as a warm hearth dominated Adem's celebrated first record 'Homesongs'. The space around us, the space between us, the space within us, space as a metaphor and space as, well, just space; it is literally everywhere.

"Writing about one thing over the course of a whole album, makes a lot of sense to me, especially when the subject is as big as this," says Adem. "The concept happened early on when I noticed that the songs I was writing were naturally similarly themed."

This idea comes into play in two of the songs that provide the strongest musical link back to the tender glow of 'Homesongs'. The title track, 'Love and other planets', warms the cold night air with an earthly harmonium, while Adem gazes at the stars and concludes that we are none of us alone. Elsewhere on the spectral and lovely '**Spirals**', he equates the minute infinity of being in love to the soundless music of the spheres.

"Just because I'm writing about space, doesn't mean I wanted it to sound like a 70's sci-fi movie soundtrack," says Adem. "I didn't immediately reach for my synthesizer. I still wanted the record to sound emotional and acoustic, and homespun and heartfelt; to remind people it was made by a human being. It's all about my perspective and wonderment rather than any scientific overview."

The beats that pepper the record also draw upon the previously near invisible influence of electronic and dance music, with Adem using production techniques as an end in themselves rather than a means to make the instruments sound good together.

"There's a little bit more space [sic] and on certain tracks I've been letting the rhythm lead instead of the melody," says Adem. Percussion and clapping provide some of the most innovative and exciting moments on 'Love and other planets'. '**X is for kisses**' clatters along at a train-on-a-track pace created by chorused backing voices intoning the letters of the alphabet in order, while Adem sings a line beginning with each in turn. The pay off here being that he doesn't sing a line starting with "x", hence the song's title.

This sort of playful experimentation extends to the pairing of '**Launch yourself**' and '**You and moon**', two very different songs each of which exhibit a far-flung rhythmical influence. Fast pattering handclaps herald the massed layered vocals of 'Launch yourself', a song about being abandoned on a distant planet by your co-pilot. That's a metaphor, I reckon.

'You and moon', meanwhile, is almost hip-hop in its open, slightly lurching beat - again provided by handclaps - while warmth comes by a struck wooden block, a sawed double bass and a

sparsely plucked thumb piano - Adem was always drawn to the inspired use of thumb piano on Whitney Houston's 'It's Not Right, But It's OK' - and "You and moon" is fantastic and unlike anything on 'Homesongs'. "*We are making music with instruments of science,*" lies Adem, as he creates a magical sonic spell out of purely acoustic stuff lying around any given musical household.

'**Warning call**', which opens 'Love and other planets', uses its vari-time-signature structure to leave a hanging question: if we were told by a higher intelligence that we were royally and irrevocably fucked up the only place we were ever going to have to live, would we/could we do anything about it? There is a neat M Night Shyamalan-cum-*Planet of the Apes* twist at the end of this song, but I won't ruin it by telling you what it is.

'**Something's going to come**' which follows takes the prettily picked guitars which characterised 'Homesongs' and adds to them the rousing multi-layered vocals that provide one of the signature sounds of 'Love and other planets'. This second track also provides the first sight of the drums absent from the album's predecessor but are here everywhere to great effect, adding energy and momentum throughout.

"I think this record is a more mature thing. It is deliberately designed to not be as immediate as before, but to reveal itself gradually over time," says Adem. Indeed, a lot of the subjects with which 'Love and other planets' concerns itself seem never to reveal themselves. '**These lights are meaningful**', for instance, takes an almost pagan approach to stargazing, looking for "something beyond ourselves" in the "pretty sparks" of the firmament.

Finally, '**Human beings gather 'round**' takes us to the final moment of creation and provides hope where there is none, in a far distant future that sounds strangely like the creaky past. Glockenspiels chime in not-quite unison and again a harmonium provides human warmth to the dying of the light.

'Love and other planets' sees Adem taking his music further whilst keeping the intimacy of 'Homesongs'. He has broadened his perspectives to make a bold record unafraid of taking leaps into the dark of experimentation yet still keeping his trademark strong melodies and heartfelt delivery. With 'Love and other planets' Adem has made a giant leap for [a] man and a small step for mankind, to paraphrase someone, somewhere, sometime.

Adem is a member of Fridge with Sam Jeffers and Kieran Hebden (the latter of Four Tet). Fridge are about midway through making their fifth album, a record which will get finished when everybody gets a bit of time. Kieran helped Adem with the final mix of 'Love and other planets' because Adem is mono-aural (deaf in one ear). Alongside this album, Adem has been undertaking various production and remix work, making music for films and organising improvised live musical happenings under the name Assembly – of which there is also planned an album later in the year. Adem organises the occasional London-based Homefires festival, showcasing interesting new music to which he's taken a fancy. He will be on tour throughout 2006.

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