

denison witmer

FINDING YOUR FEET — AGAIN

“[Witmer] sounds ready: cannily fleshing out his sound with help from friends, but never losing sight of the style he’s honed for years”
— Pitchforkmedia.com

Patience is a virtue, they say — Denison Witmer knows this well from personal experience. Until recently, only a small audience has had the good fortune to hear Witmer live or on record. All of that is changing, however, due to the company he keeps and his steadfast dedication to making worthwhile music.

Witmer’s emergent circle of talented peers includes: *The Innocence Mission*, *Sufjan Stevens*, *My Morning Jacket*, *Damien Jurado*, and *Rosie Thomas*. Denison has toured with all of these artists, some of whom appear as guest musicians on his new record, *Are You A Dreamer?*

Recorded in Lancaster, Pa., with Innocence Mission guitarist Don Peris (the same mentor who helmed Witmer’s flawless debut *Safe Away*), *Are You A Dreamer?* extends Witmer’s previous folk stylings with a broader lyrical approach and more thoughtful arrangements. The venerable *CMJ* (College Music Journal) proclaimed: “Denison Witmer applies confessional sensitivity to his newest album as he ponders dreams and the hopes they inspire. [His] gentle guitar and soothing voice are deceptively powerful, enough to put even the most jaded indie rockers in touch with their inner James Taylor.” This is high praise in a niche market economy, where gimmickry and glitz too often beat out melody and meaning.

Witmer himself is as understated and deceptively low-key as his music, shyly letting it be known that he is delighted recent press has placed him more solidly in the ‘70s singer-songwriter camp than among flash-in-the-pan “neo-folkies.” He’s quick to point out that he has been making records for almost a decade, and isn’t just following some trend.

Perhaps it is this tenure in the indie music scene that gives his music such depth, such appeal. “I like touring and revisiting places over and over again to a slightly larger audience each time,” Witmer says. “I know there is a limited group of people who will get into my music, but as long as I’m doing something honest that resonates with them, I’m confident they’ll pick up on that and keep coming to my shows. So far this has been the case and I feel very blessed. I prefer it over having some huge overnight success and wondering whether my fans will still be around next year.”

On *Are You A Dreamer?*, Witmer examines beginnings, endings, imagination, faith, aspiration, and the world of dreams with equal sensitivity. The ethereal subject matter melds seamlessly into the airy acoustic sound conjured from Witmer’s guitar and talented band of collaborators. Karen Peris’s haunting harmonies, Don Peris’s tremulous electric guitar, James McAlister’s conscientious drumming, and Sufjan Stevens’ terse banjo work all come across the speakers as perfect complements to the songwriter’s innermost thoughts. The outcome is intimate, with focus on Witmer’s dexterous guitar work and expressive voice.

And all this finesse and polish has not gone unnoticed. Recently, *Entertainment Weekly* gushed: “We are smitten with these sweet drowsy ditties. ... [Witmer’s] modest reach and pensive melodies could easily get lost in the white noise of contemporary culture, it would be a shame, though, to miss tiny gems like these.”

Are You A Dreamer? serves as a powerful reminder that no matter how many sensitive guys with acoustic guitars make records, genuine talents like Witmer — hidden somewhere among lesser lights — will eventually reveal themselves. Warmth shines through every moment of *Are You A Dreamer?*, bringing a welcome sense of optimism often lacking in the world of confessional troubadours. Witmer’s positive spirit of regeneration has been recognized, as *Hyperactive Magazine* noted: “[*Are You A Dreamer?*] takes listeners on a journey through picturesque landscapes of heartfelt dreams and hopes. ... Witmer has earned a spot close to the front of the long line of young singer/songwriters who are bound to make it big.”

In the singer’s own words, “*Are You A Dreamer?* is about finding peace and remaining hopeful in a situation that feels completely out of control. A lot of people are feeling defeated right now. We’re full of anxiety associated with society’s pressure to become something more important than what we feel we currently are. We’re constantly being told that if we’re not moving forward (or able to prove how we’ve gotten to where we are with perfect checks and balances) then we can’t be trusted or taken seriously. *Are You A Dreamer?* is about giving in to life’s mysteries, picking yourself back up, and continuing to go for it even in the face of a string of failures.”



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