

On the back of the American airplay success of the track 'Virtual Song' from his critically acclaimed debut "Is That All?", session guitar fave Matt Backer has put out his long-awaited second album, "The Impulse Man". With the new release he continues to mine the same rich musical seam, all your favourite pop and rock guitar licks, songs with effortlessly catchy hooks and soaring harmonies, and lyrics that are an extension of his laconic and self-deprecating character. ***Matt Backer - The Impulse Man***

Like a hip Nick Hornby he guides us through the minefield of contradictions inherent in being a middle-aged rocker. However unlike Hornby, who appropriates vehicles such as football or popular music to mediate his mid-life angst, Backer is the real deal; he is a walking encyclopedia of popular music guitar styles, and whether your idea of axe heaven encompasses George Harrison, Ernie Isley and Marc Bolan, then this record delivers on both a sonic and musical level.

Highlights include the opening cut "Cold War", a hilarious paean to the late sixties/early seventies that somehow manages to sew together Teflon frying pans, Idi Amin and Captain Kirk into a Hendrix/Free style rockout. The title track is a poke at the balladeering "weltschmerz" of acts such as the Verve but manages to combine sarcasm with real sentiment. However, my favourite of a strong bunch is "Falling In Love With Myself", a comic powerpop sideswipe at contemporary celebrity culture with more just a hint of faux-self-awareness and Brian Wilson harmonies to boot!

If you are male, have recently considered buying either a motorbike or an electric guitar, dye your hair or are in denial about hair loss, and have been in a "stable" relationship for a long time, then this album may work out cheaper than therapy. Turn it up, put your foot down and you'll zip down that mid-life Ventura highway without (hardly) feeling the pain.

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