



Caribou **Our Love**

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You reach a point in life where the question of how to stay at the top of your game looms; the only real solution being, you change the game. *Our Love*, the new album from Caribou, is the sound of Dan Snaith doing just that.

Having followed up his Polaris Prize winning record *Andorra* with the universally adored *Swim* in 2010 (selling nearly 175, 000 copies worldwide and being named 'Album of the Year' by Rough Trade, Mixmag and Resident Advisor whilst also hitting *The Guardian*, *Pitchfork* and *Mojo's Top 20*), Dan has spent the intervening four years touring the world, bringing not only the sounds of Caribou to the stage but proving his immeasurable worth as a DJ with epic 7.5 hour long sets. In 2012 Caribou were personally invited to join Radiohead on the road whilst Dan released his first album under the guise of his dance floor loving pseudonym, *Daphni*, to widespread critical acclaim. Following the shape shifting sounds of *JIAOLONG* and the brightly textured, fluid constructions of *Swim* – both inward looking records in their own way – Dan withdrew to the basement once more to work on Caribou's next opus. Only he didn't: *Our Love* isn't the sound of isolated creation but the sound of Dan at his most connected - with love for his listeners, his collaborators and those closest to him.

Yes, this album is about love: "But not the kind of pubescent 'love at first sight' new love or in the Hallmark sense" explains Dan "In the real and complicated way that people's loving relationships develop over time, settling into something that they didn't imagine at the start. Love is not some perfect platonic form but rather a collection of compromises and dependencies. But far from that debasing it – that's what makes it the only meaningful thing there is. That is what 'Our Love' means for me. It's not some bullshit fairy tale but the daily connection and presence between people." Though more an outwardly observational exploration

than a self-examination, it's this direct, very real, connection that finds itself at the core of Dan's approach to the album.

"I'd always thought it was a nice, and interesting, side effect of making my music in search of purely selfish thrills that others would connect with it emotionally" says Dan. "With this album – because of the way Swim connected with people more emotionally than my previous albums – I wanted to make music for the people who listen to Caribou." And so with Our Love he found himself thinking of how a fan would hear his music whilst he was making it. "I wanted to make a record which sounded like I was always right next to the listener while they were hearing it. That's another meaning of 'Our Love' – the sense that the love I put into music making is not just for myself now. It's for the people who will listen to it. I wanted to make music that's generous in that sense – with the intention that if you are listening to it then it is for you." But it's not just the honest, giving nature of these sentiments that make Our Love what it is, it's the way in which those sentiments collide with the directness of Dan's production.

From submerged vocal beginnings to the teasing synths of its closing moments, everything on Our Love is perfectly placed. It's uncluttered but not sterile; minimal but not distant, straightforward but still incredibly sophisticated. The gleaming, addictive cycles and manifest mantra of lead single 'Can't Do Without You' exemplify the combination of these elements perfectly: its singular looped lyrical hook twisting with limited melodic sequences to become this breathing, growing, meaningful, complex thing that speaks of dependency and dysfunction as much as love and connection. "In the past I've enjoyed disguise and obfuscation" says Dan, "hiding sounds so that they're just barely poking out, whereas this time every part had to be serving a purpose or it was removed. I guess it removed the possibility of Emperor's New Clothes syndrome – if you retain only the kernel of what the music is about, you have nowhere to hide. The same goes for the metaphor-less language. I like the idea of presenting myself directly in front of the listener - not much reverb, not much echo, not much dissembling."

Our Love is formed around a mixture of digital pop production, hip hop inspired beats, muted house basslines and a love of shuffling garage that can be traced all the way back to the time of Start Breaking My Heart which are, of course, all filtered through Dan's own unique perspective. The warm analogue sounds of classic soul should not be overlooked either, for they weave themselves most intensely into the records DNA. In fact, Our Love is probably Caribou's most soulful record to date, with tracks like 'Back Home' whose heartfelt lyrics - dealing in tired relationships and a weary kind of love – and organic nature cut through the bubbling synths, and blissful euphoria of their synthetic constructions. It's not all downbeat of course, whilst some thoughts linger on mortality, loss and letting go, there is always an element of celebration.

It's not just a celebration of love either, it's a celebration of community – more specifically the

musical community that supported the recording of *Our Love*. Stretching from his current homestead in London back across the Atlantic to his Canadian roots, it's in this community and the collaborative nature of the record that Dan finds another, very literal, meaning for *Our Love*. "Our Love means something to me in the sense of addressing my love of music itself; this being something that was created with other people forms an integral part of just what the music means to me." There is always going to be an element of that insular dialogue between Dan and the world he has created but this is his "most genuinely collaborative record," featuring as it does guest vocals from Jessy Lanza, violin arrangements from Owen Pallett and the majestic mixing hand of David Wrench once again.

Jessy Lanza appears on mid album track 'Second Chance'. Speaking about her guest vocal duties Dan says "She's from my home town and I know her through Jeremy Greenspan from Junior Boys. Her debut album last year really blew me away and I knew that I'd love her to write something for the record with me. She was fantastic to work with, and is super talented. I'm not sure what would have happened to it without her involvement." A richly textured, phasing-effect-heavy number that operates in the album's higher frequencies, 'Second Chance' is centred around a wonderfully shifting sense of melody, the nature of its chorus leading you somewhere entirely unexpected whilst leaving you waiting until the final moments for that extra kick.

Much like Dan's observations about personal relationships shifting into something previously unimagined, the constantly morphing nature of *Our Love*'s tracks inject a thrill into proceedings as the listener ends up somewhere unforeseen. Dan's ability to bring the listener with him through a track's twists and turns has its roots in Daphni too of course (as do the hollow vocal swells of 'Dive' and the loose, intuitive trips of 'Mars'), as Dan once explained: "DJs have the potential to blindside you. During the time I was making the Caribou album *Swim*, I'd fallen back in love with moments in small, dark clubs when a DJ puts on a piece of music that not only can you not identify, but that until you heard it, you could not have conceived of existing." This particular trait is most evident in 'Julia Brightly' and title track 'Our Love' - just one of the many songs to feature violin arrangements from Owen Pallett (who worked with Dan in between being on the road with Arcade Fire, writing and recording his own album *In Conflict*, scoring a ballet for the National Ballet of Canada and being nominated for an Oscar for his *Her* soundtrack).

"Our Love' was supposed to be a sort of mellow coda to 'All I Ever Need' [the track that precedes it which Owen also wrote the violin arrangements for] but then I made the big bassline and I liked the way it unexpectedly turned 90 degrees in the middle. This track went through a million versions. The bassline was definitely made out of fascination/admiration for dance music that is mind-numbingly simple. When I sent it to Owen and asked him to write parts I was talking about the arrangement and layout of the song as a kind of chess game where the parts move around one another in a sort of dance. He came back with the spectral Penderecki high strings and the more baroque riffs you can hear which we both agreed had to be used super

super sparingly so it was more like a little treat for the listener when they appeared.”

Speaking more on his collaboration with Owen, Dan says “Owen and I have been friends for a long time, though you don't have to spend long with him to know that he is an immense talent and a very singular one. He is fantastic not only because he's so talented and versatile but because he unfailingly has a very different perspective on things than other people - including me - so he would shake up the direction in which a song was headed in a way that was really useful.”

Owen also wrote the string parts for 'Silver' (the most obviously melancholic track on the album and one that uses the spaces in between the repeating loops to say as much as the beats themselves) and album closer 'Your Love Will Set You Free'. Speaking on the more languid beats for the epic closer, Dan explains that it is “meant to be a sort of relaxed coda to the album. Everything is ratcheted up so tight to this point - all that tension has built up and up - this is meant to be a moment of release, stretching out and breathing a bit more. It's the most purely positive song too. It's a cliché but I think more and more and feel less and less ashamed about acknowledging that love is all we have. It's difficult and complex and imperfect but the things that stitch us together are the only meaningful things there are. This song and this album were about trying to shed all the artifice, ironic detachment and distance and just say the things that are important. Love is what's important.”

Track Listing:

1. Can't Do Without You 3:56
2. Silver 5:17
3. All i ever Need 3:53
4. Our Love 5:34
5. Dive 2:07
6. Second Chance 4:00
7. Julia Brightly 2:03
8. Mars 5:46
9. Back Home 3:33
10. Your Love Will Set You Free 5:47

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