

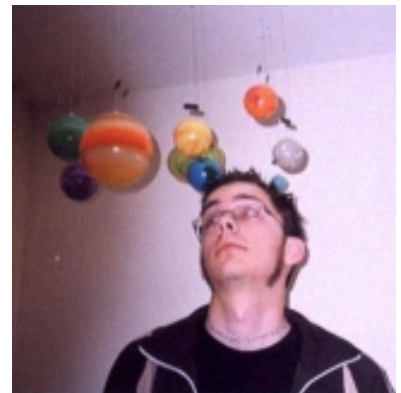


jamie barnes

the fallen acrobat

Jamie Barnes' debut album ***The Fallen Acrobat*** is the most accessible record we've ever dealt with on Silber, maybe even our first non-angst oriented record. But something about his demos permeated our ranks and filled our offices with beautiful sounds. We're really excited to be the first to present him to you.

Barnes' strengths lie in simple, hooky, lo-fi bedroom pop gems: songs that aren't going to change the world, but will perhaps make someone happier to be alive than they woke up feeling. His delivery is beautifully understated and even optimistic as he sings poignant autumnal folk songs that recall failed attempts at unrealistic plans. Barnes confesses with candor that many of his influences are actually Silber-related (he actually covers a Rivulets song here), though his songs seem closer to the subtle musings of Nick Drake, Secret Stars, Field Mice or the Aculera label's output than the sonic assaults of Remora or Aarktica.



The Fallen Acrobat was recorded over the course of one year in Barnes' bedroom (like all personal records should be) & it's the best result of dropping out of college we've heard. Here Barnes managed to capture the intimacy of home in his songs, working not only with solo instrumentation, but with a diverse blend of elements like toy piano, glockenspiel, and basically "all the cool stuff from around the house." Just more proof that Silber is working to bring tunes out of the bedroom and into your headphones.



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"The debut release by this Louisville, KY, musician is cut from a very similar grain as the recent works by Jon DeRosa and Nathan Amundson, though with the added twist of a very clever sense of humor. Barnes doesn't take himself too seriously on these songs even though they are of the most intimate sort, recorded over a year in his bedroom like some indie-folk Moby. He does wear his influences a bit too proudly on his sleeve, though, even covering "Anyway..." by Rivulets and thanking the obvious objects of comparison in the liner notes. I'll forgive that any day, though, when the work is this full of promise and yet brilliantly quirky all in the same moment. Barnes plays all the instruments on Acrobat, which basically amounts to guitar and minimal percussion, but the simplicity of this music and his vocal presence make it seem like so much more. The title track is sickeningly sweet but with a morbid edge, as the narrator falls for a girl like an acrobat who plummets from the wire. Barnes sings about her picking up his limbs and putting them back in their sockets before the vultures come and it's still the sweetest song about love I've heard this year. The songs run the gamut of emotions and situations, from swerving into oncoming traffic on "Games We Play on Road Trips" to unrequited love that turns to murder on "wait For Her" (incidentally, any folk song that actually uses the word "shiv" soars to the top of my list instantly). Barnes is not necessarily an innovator, but his debut album is accomplished nonetheless; not too shabby for a 21-year-old college dropout."

~ Rob Devlin, Brainwashed

"The Fallen Acrobat is a beautiful album of bedroom folk songs, closer in style and spirit to Christian Kiefer than any artist on Silber's regular roster. A very strong debut, it features Jamie Barnes multitracking vocals, acoustic guitar, toy piano, glockenspiel, flute, and field recordings in his bedroom. The instrumentation is charmingly naive, his lyrics generally meaningful and touching, and his melodies very catchy. Failed relationships provide the main topic for Barnes' lyrics, but he also touches more socially conscious subjects "Peaceful Protest," "Ambition is Poisonous" and dreamier ruminations "A Ceiling Lit with Stars." "Burning Leaves" stands out as the strongest song, beautifully arranged, moving, and filled with bits of surprising wisdom for a kid of that age. Other highlights include "Wait for Her" (a typical love triangle, but the harsher words are sung on such a delicate tone), a rendition of Rivulets' "Anyway..." (the closest to a pop song Barnes get on this set), and "Unhappy," where the singer admits "I don't know much about dating / or interior decorating," which might explain the main topic of the album after all. Barnes' voice is warm, understated but precise, soft-spoken, simply perfect for this particular kind of intimate folk songs. The Fallen Acrobat compensates for one hundred lousy bedroom albums you may have heard. And to think that it is only Barnes' first record fills the heart with hope."

~ François Couture, All Music Guide

"Well here's something different from the Silber label. Jamie Barnes is a singer-songwriter from Kentucky who plays.... SONGS! Yup, just really nice heartfelt songs. I guess at the core I'd call him a folk singer. He's got a nice singing voice and his melodies are simple yet captivating. Jamie uses mostly acoustic guitar to create the music, but also employs piano, bells and more to embellish and color his sound. I thought the toy piano interludes on a few tracks were a nice touch that add a spark of innocence to the music. The promo sheet compares Jamie to Nick Drake, among other artists I've not heard of, though I'd say Jamie is much more upbeat and positive than anything I recall hearing from Nick Drake. A bit brooding at times so sure, I guess I'll go with the Drake analogy. I even detect hints of psychedelia at times. (My wife called out from the living room asking what I was listening to and said it sounded to her like Simon & Garfunkle.) So if you like well crafted acoustic tunes sung with passion and with well written lyrics, then you will more than likely enjoy what Jamie Barnes has to offer. "

~ Jerry Kranitz, Aural Innovations

"If Bastoni is innocent, Jamie Barnes is child-like. This 21-year-old recorded his debut, The Fallen Acrobat, in

his Kentucky bedroom. This is angelic pop whose sweetness is embodied by the occasional use of a toy piano. The risk of becoming pretentious is always present but Barnes avoids it. The album sounds like he sneaked into your childhood and put to music the fanciful thoughts you never put into words. And Edward Gorey would've

admired the twist that Barnes slips into the blissfully idyllic "Wait For Her."

~ Tony Peyser, Santa Monica Mirror

"I am not often interested in reviewing any singer-songwriter if not showing some kind of intimacy. Jamie recorded his songs in his bedroom, over a year span of collecting them. Still arranged and well recorded it has the advantage of studio work as well as the well protected conception of the well protected inspiration room. Some of these arrangements on its own are even pretty nice to discover, like the pretty handpercussion on "Anyway..". These arrangements fits just perfect with all song expressions. This is pretty, laid-back songwriting, with little thoughts/meditations of life to think over before going to sleep. Some touches of tumbpiano gives the music some less specified aspect of a lullaby. A nice debut !"

~ Psyche van het Folk

"Jamie Barnes recorded *The Fallen Acrobat* in his bedroom over the course of a year. Like all good bedroom music, it's sparsely lush, pretty and personal; Barnes played all the instruments, and his arrangements of acoustic guitar, hand drums, xylophone and various found sounds are well suited to his hushed, sweet vocals. Like really good bedroom music, *The Fallen Acrobat* hides a flair for storytelling and a sly, rather twisted sense of humor beneath its mild-mannered exterior. On the title track, for example, Barnes compares falling in love to tumbling from a high wire. After he's splattered himself all over the ground, the object of his affections will "Pick my limbs up / And put them in their sockets / Gather all the change up / That emptied from my pockets" before the vultures arrive to do what vultures do best. The "twisted love" theme shows up in various incarnations throughout the record; it's interesting to hear sentiments like "I don't want to be here / I'm bored to tears with this

relationship" or "You want to drive a shiv through his head" expressed in the folkish way usually reserved for the kinder, gentler feelings.

Not all the tracks fall into the relationship-song category. "Games We Play on Roadtrips" is a distinctive treatment of the joys of car travel, comparing traffic noises to music ("It's like jazz out on the highway... it's like folk out in the country"); "Peaceful Protest" questions the divinity of religious symbols, asking "Do the pearly gates ever swing outward instead?".

Aside from "Anyway...", a hand-drum-driven Rivulets cover, most everything on *The Fallen Acrobat* has a similar

slow, dreamy feeling. However, the songs are written and instrumented diversely enough to avoid sameyness. Barnes's guitar playing is excellent, and his plinky keyboard and flute lines show a well-developed ear for melody. It's obvious that some thought went into the production of this debut; it sounds better than many studio-recorded records I've heard. Barnes is only 21 years old -- look for even better things from him in the future."

~ Sarah Zachrich, Splendid

"Silber Records has an excellent track record of releasing quality music from lesser known, but generally more talented artists whom the major record labels generally ignore. Their diverse roster included among its artists the likes of Aarktica, Clang Quartet, and Remora. Musician Jamie Barnes makes his debut on their label with *The Fallen Acrobat*.

The Fallen Acrobat is a decidedly low-key debut for Jamie Barnes. A low-fidelity recording, Barnes recorded the album entirely in his own bedroom within the space of a year and wrote 11 of its 12 songs. Though some

might misinterpret the highly personal way in which *The Fallen Acrobat* was created as self-indulgence, Barnes acquits himself nicely by way of some really poignant songwriting. Also, self-indulgence is one of the fringe benefits of being signed to an independent label, as Barnes is.

The Fallen Acrobat is a predominantly acoustic collection of laid-back folk-pop in the vein of Gordon Lightfoot and the late Harry Nilsson, circa the late '60s and early '70s. Combining elaborate songwriting with a restrained and conversational singing style, Barnes creates an emotionally affective but musically redundant album.

Barnes' exceptional songwriting skills are the album's main attraction. His delineating use of metaphor is most enticing. The title track, for instance, likens the experience of falling madly in love to the helplessness an acrobat experiences falling from a trapeze. Another song, "Burning Leaves" likens coming of age and mortality to decomposing like burning leaves.

Songs like "Games We Play on Road Trips" and "For Centuries" seem more like ephemeral meditations on the present. "Games We Play on Road Trips", for instance, vividly describes all the passing images and physical sensations associated with those images through the eyes of Barnes on a road trip, with little to no reference to anything symbolic.

Jamie Barnes's proclivity toward subtlety permeates the album, both vocally and musically. His understated vocal delivery seemingly imbues all 12 of the songs on *The Fallen Acrobat* with a detached, almost lethargic tone. More, the musical discretion exercised by Barnes on the largely acoustic recording tends to unintentionally lend a sound-alike redundancy to the album. By incorporating various musical novelties such as the xylophone, glockenspiel, and toy piano, Barnes somewhat offsets these issues.

The Fallen Acrobat is more fully balanced by its more diverse tracks like "Anyway", "Unhappy", and "Peaceful Protest". "Anyway" and "Unhappy" are augmented by the presence of faint percussive sounds in their respective backgrounds. "Peaceful Protest", undoubtedly the album's most colorful track, includes tambourine and flute, giving the song a slightly autumnal-Celtic feel. Another track, "Ambition is Poisonous" uses German voice samples in the background.

All things considered, *The Fallen Acrobat* is a cathartic, if not necessarily pleasant listen. Though, the discretely acoustic feel of the album (and this can't be stressed enough) at times makes the listening experience somewhat humdrum, Barnes perfects an emotionally enriching listening experience through his eloquent songwriting. Indeed, Barnes not only captures the intimacy of his home surroundings but creates an album of low-key pop confections sure to inspire perseverance in the face of failed and wasted dreams. Indeed, Jamie Barnes' *The Fallen Acrobat* challenges the listener to look inward and not be captivated by his or her own deep regrets. *The Fallen Acrobat* is a worthy debut indeed. "

~ Mervin W. Malone Jr., PopMatters

"It's when 21 year old Jamie Barnes from Louisville, KY sings "it seems like everything we were told as kids makes more sense with age" that he finally wins me over. It's one of the highlights from his brand new *The Fallen Acrobat* for the always impressive Silber imprint. But not that the rest is left far behind. What we get is folk-pop made for bedrooms, and if I'm not fooled by the great sense of intimacy, it was probably made in one as well. The press kit states that these are songs that won't change the world, but perhaps make someone happier to be alive than they woke up feeling. That's exactly how I feel about the charming, bouncy pop version of Rivulets' "Anyways" that despite its melancholic vocal, it brings a smile to my face. Rivulets is actually a one man orchestra that comes to mind while listening to *The Fallen Acrobat*. But Barnes seems like a happier guy than Nathan Amundson has ever been. In a similar fashion as Secret Stars (old time cover stars of this here mag), Barnes has the ability to be subtle yet powerful in his earnest descriptions of the world. With this release, Silber has slightly shifted gears presenting what is probably the most structured and accessible release in their catalog yet. But the quality mark remains constant and that is what we care about."

~ Mats Gustafson, The Broken Face

"Jamie Barnes is a singer-songwriter, but not an ordinary one. His songs find the balance between "pretty" and "raw" that similar musicians strive for but miss. The texture of Barnes' debut album *The Fallen Acrobat* is soft and lovely, built with acoustic guitar and piano. It offers that pastoral feeling that makes you imagine you're lying in a field somewhere, or perhaps walking alone in the woods. The lyrics, however, don't present some idyllic dreamland, but are filled with the complex emotions of real people. They're hopeful but acknowledge fears, mistakes, disasters. They're complicated, whether he's singing a love letter (the title track asks an intended lover to pick up his limbs before the vultures get them in case of an accident) or singing about the growth and decay that accompanies the passing of years ("Burning Leaves"). Barnes' music brings to mind folk-pop musicians of the past (Nick Drake emerges in some of the album's prettiest moments, like the dreamy "Ambition Is Poisonous") while sounding very of today and personal (in that way it often reminds me of James William Hindle's two albums)...but there's also an endearing do-it-yourself, kitchen-sink quality to the recording which truly amplifies the intimacy of the songs. *The Fallen Acrobat* is like listening to someone sing you his secrets, but in the friendliest of tones."

~ Dave Heaton, *Erasing Clouds*

"Jamie Barnes debut album is very understated when compared to everything else that is on the Silber media label. Not to say that it is a bad album at all, just very different. Very melodious song structures and a made at home feel to it. It's imbued with really emotional lyrics. This reminds me very much of a band called 301 that I received with much the same trepidation as I did this one. I didn't expect to like this album upon first seeing the album cover and even less when I read the track listings, but this album totally won me over. It's a very great bit of story writing. Track 4, *For Centuries* is gorgeous, as is track number 9, *Unhappy*. I now have dreams of happy little marching snowmen from the back cover creeping into my existence."

~ Azrael Racek, *Gothic Revue*

"I met Jamie Barnes at a local bookstore where he works in the music department. I was buying a couple of CDs and we started talking about my music interests. He suggested I might enjoy his work, which apparently does well in Europe, Japan and Sweden but is virtually unknown in his hometown. I got a copy of his disc *The Fallen Acrobat* and then asked him for a copy of the lyrics. He recorded this in his home in Pewee Valley. The songs are all original with Barnes writing and composing all but "Anyway." He performs guitar, percussion and every other bit on the album. His music for "Fallen Acrobat" could stand on its own with Jamie's special twists. His music matches his voice to perfection. His lyrics beg thought and often shake emotions. His poetry could stand alone. "Wait for Her" is a masterpiece in spite of the very disturbing finish - but then humans and life are often less than desired.

Jamie asks in "Peaceful Protest," "o they ever get sad in Heaven?/Do tears really make up the sea?/Do martyrs die for lost causes?" Tough questions that need to be asked, especially in these times. "Ambition is Poisonous" challenges the paradox of the American lifestyle stating, "Everyone's always trying to kill off the dandelions/And everyone is scared to death of dying." When I first heard "For Centuries" I thought it was Simon and Garfunkel-that's a compliment. Jamie is, however, even more talented.

I am now a Jamie Barnes fan. His music entertains me, while his words challenge and disturb me. At first, the lyrics bothered me too much. In the 1960s I loved the music and the words challenged and disturbed me; so I guess personal history repeats itself and the phrase from *Burning Leaves*-"Faces froze, we decompose like burning leaves"-best describes how the majority of the world faces the issues.

My enthusiasm for this man's work is only limited by the 300 words I am allowed. One criticism, however: the lyrics must be published with the CD. His musical talent is superb. I really hope someone in Louisville besides me takes the time to notice the work and bring Barnes to the stage. He should be making music instead of selling music."

~ Larry Alexander, *Louisville Music News*

"Jamie Barnes' indie pop debut has a fragile strength that deftly weaves sparking acoustic compositions with waves of wondrous experimentation. Recorded in his bedroom over one year, *The Fallen Acrobat* collects campfire melodies and symphonic pop - only these symphonies are comprised of toy instruments, hand claps, glockenspiel, piano, and keyboard sounds convincingly portraying strings and harpsichord. Whimsical numbers like "Wait For Her" blend church bells and a waltz beat that manages to be indulgent without sounding pretentious, while the quietly cascading piano and guitar of "A Ceiling Lit With Stars" and banjo refrain of "For Centuries" are dreamy and hypnotic. "

~ Miles of Music

"La navidad del 2003 fue acompañada dulcemente por este disco a cargo de Jamie Barnes, quien se adjudica prácticamente toda la sensibilidad, autoría (a excepción de "Anyway ...") y belleza de esta obra. Un excelente disco.

El disco arranca con los acordes acústicos de la guitarra de "The Fallen Acrobat" que da título al disco y muestra la voz (que debes imaginar ya, asociando el esquema singer-songwriter) en mi opinión muy agradable de Barnes, que te va a arrullar a lo largo de todos los tracks, buenos coros y la percusión que debe incluir -como indica en el booklet- reliquias del hogar. Una melodía pegajosa, digna de presentar lo que vas a escuchar por

"Wait For Her" más calmada, hablando de la espera del ser querido. Se va creciendo con más guitarras, las cajas de música, los aplausos, haciendo de este todo un arrullo. Donde notamos que no se requiere todo el tiempo de la batería para generar música (al menos, no en este tipo de música).

Una de las joyas del disco, "Games We Play..." realmente te transporta en momentos a aquellos viajes largos en automóvil con toda la familia, tomé el papel de niño en esta ocasión. El piano y las campanitas le dan un toque especial de nostalgia. Un track simple, bellamente simple.

Mi preferida del disco, sin embargo, es "For Centuries", desde el suspiro inicial "I don't want to be here, I'm bored to tears with this questionnaire; I would rather be on my back watching the stars attack the planets..." mientras dejas entrar las notas de un banjo que llega profundo. Totalmente americana en su letra, este fue mi regalo de navidad en el 2003.

"Anyway..." más alegre, con percusiones que salen quién sabe de qué artefactos, la única que no es de Barnes, tiene un tinte distinto a los anteriores tracks, sin embargo, no deja de ser Barnes y de ser un atractivo track.

"Burning Leaves" regresa el disco a la "normalidad" con un suave y largo susurro, dando lugar a los vientos (whistles provenientes de flautas) en "Peaceful Protest" que comienza a crecer con los panderos y coros, tirando más a un neo-country (quizá sin serlo). Regresan los arpegios de guitarra acústica con "Ambition Is Poisonous" en el mismo tono que las anteriores canciones, con todo y su sonido ambiental y diálogos en off, quizá requiriendo un cambio en el tono, que no llega con una "Unhappy" que sin embargo te pone al tanto de la letra.

"Matthew" es otro himno al compás del piano y "arreglos de cuerda" al fondo. Sigue sin salirse de tono, sin embargo es de esos tracks que logran atraparte. Lo mismo se puede decir de "A Ceiling ..." que también se llena de sencillos sonidos de piano, pero resaltando sobre todo a la guitarra.

El disco cierra excelentemente con el arrullo final de "The Omega Man...", quizá más lento, pero con otra tonalidad, un bonito track para finalizar.

Un disco bien presentado en su sencillez que logra engancharte y difícilmente soltarte.

Quien haya tomado alguna vez una guitarra para acompañarse en la soledad quedará encantado con este disco y los que no, seguro intentarán hacerlo o simplemente sentarse, cerrar los ojos y disfrutarlo. Se los recomiendo muchísimo.

~ Ciro Velázquez, Eufonia