

TWELVE FIRST ALBUM

"I've been a fan of Chris Olley ever since I heard Six By Seven's "Ten Places to Die" in 1999. So when I found out he'd started work on another project called Twelve that was more experimental & that he didn't have an album released yet, but did have half a dozen singles, I knew I had to get to put out their first album." – Brian John Mitchell, Silber Records



Twelve is a new project of Six By Seven's vocalist/guitarist Chris Olley, featuring the vocals of Tee Dymond & the drums of Six By Seven's Chris Davis. While this is more experimental than a lot of Six By Seven material from the opening Eno-esque drone of 24 guitars on "Intro" through to the melancholy country inspired "Now," it remains a beautifully understated collection of songs and instrumentals. Bittersweet ballads, krautrock beats, pulsing electronica, loops, & guitar exploration all so finely honed that they could sneak in as pop music at times.

Like nearly all of the records we release as well as all the albums we love here at Silber, *First Album* was recorded & produced by the band itself. It was produced & recorded by Chris Olley at the Batcave in Nottingham to keep the songs pure & uncompromising & allow an ear for every intricate detail.

While Twelve do possess some of the same sonic sensibilities associated with others in the current British experimental pop scene, their sound is more personal & emotionally evocative. If Neil Young was writing *Harvest* with Low as his backing band or if Lou Reed had teamed up with Eno for *Berlin* it might sound something like this.



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"Have you ever wondered what would happen if you put Radiohead's recent foray into experimental electronica into a blender with Red House Painters and SoulWhirlingSomewhere and hit puree? Well, whether or not you have the free time to ponder such inane questions, Twelve have decided to provide a fairly good answer with their aptly titled debut, First Album. Centered around Six.By Seven's Chris Olley, who provides the majority of the instrumental and vocal work here as well as writing and producing the album, the band is filled out by Tee Dymond and Six.By Seven drummer Chris Davis with an appearance by James Flower on the disc's final track. Combining equal parts experimental electronica and simple yet emotive semi-acoustic numbers with a dash of droning ambience, the 8 tracks found here are diverse but also cohesive. The electronica tracks are inspired compositions containing the typical electronic bleeps, bloops, and drum loops of electronica with processed sounds and organic instrumentation. On the other side of the spectrum, the album's 3 mellow rock offerings center mostly around simple 2-chord progressions projected through acoustic guitar and bass and supplemented with beautiful subtle piano, keyboard, and organ. Usually, a two-chord mellow acoustic rock track that plods on for more than 11 minutes ends up being more than a slight exercise in patience. However, Twelve actually manage to pull it off on "Talkin About" with beautiful subtle production elements that keep the song interesting and personal. The electronica tracks also manage to evolve and remain interesting, perhaps aided by the fact that they maintain an organic vibe despite their basis in electronic elements. Overall, First Album is a subtle, personal album that defies the sterility of many electronica and experimental offerings while placing an emphasis on strong production, organic sounds, and emotion. Made up of songs that exist in almost opposite musical spectrums, the album still manages to hold together as one work with a fairly consistent level of artistry and quality and a lo-fi acoustic indie rock vibe present even on its electronic-based tracks. In the end, Twelve's debut is a fairly compelling offering that's worth checking out. "

~ Joshua Heinrich, Grave Concerns

"I sometimes like music that floats effortlessly from drone to post-rock knob twiddling to electronic beats of fancy, all over the same album, and still makes it seem normal, like it isn't driven by some mental illness or other after all. Twelve's First Album is exactly that kind of record, custom designed to infect the brain and never let go,

and for the most part it accomplishes this noble, perhaps impossible, goal. In quite possibly the trippiest framework since the self-titled For Carnation album of three years ago, Twelve move effortlessly from genre to genre without so much as a breath of fresh air. Six.By Seven's Chris Olley is the brainchild of the proceedings, bringing along vocalist Tee Dymond and Six.By's drummer Chris Davis to fill it all out. The album starts with a twenty-four guitar drone track of stunning but simplistic beauty before settling in to the slow core epic "Talkin' About." Clocking in at over eleven minutes — though it doesn't ever feel like it — the track starts off quiet enough but eventually soars in two glorious crescendos of guitars and programmed strings. A lovely, earnest beginning; then, it all just goes awry, but not in a bad way. "Travelin' Light" is funk bass electronic madness with a bit of drone mixed in that sets the album on its ear, and the polyrhythmic wonder of it all takes over half the record. The slow rock returns on "Never Let You Go" and "Now," but this record belongs to the grind and grit of the programmed tracks. It's a complete record, there's nothing missing, and a combination of the styles might have made it all implode. Flawed though this may seem, it serves the record perfectly for a solid debut that previous work merely hinted at if at all."

~ Rob Devlin, Brainwashed

"The work of UK sound explorer Chris Olley who also records as Six.By Seven. Here he alternates between stark minimal droning instrumental ambience, and these stark monolithic songs sung in a flat intonation that feel like heart thoughts arranged in the slowly unfolding inevitability of cool logic and underlying passion gone cold, like one sort of end of the world. Sort of Low meets Joy Division with the occasional female vocal in there somewhere. Some subtle techno flavors merging with the more organic elements. Mixing styles but keeping it all in a similar emotional terrain allows for a cool melancholic flow. The atypical last track "Now" is the album's most pop moment."

~ George Parsons, Dream Magazine

"UK based Twelve grew out of a band called Six By Seven, a group I've never heard of but the Silber Records folks sound pretty excited about them. Twelve is the trio of Chris Olley on guitar, bass keyboards and vocals, Chris Davis on drums (both from Six By Seven), and Tee Dymond on vocals and Fender Rhodes. My interest

was further piqued by the promo sheet description that "if Neil Young was writing Harvest with Low as his backing band or if Lou Reed had teamed up with Eno for Berlin it might sound something like this". Hmmmmm.... gotta check this out.

The CD opens with "Intro", a steady pulsating sound wave that straddles the line between ambience and drone. It develops ever so slowly, but if you focus on this hypnotic wave then the subtle shifts in direction will jar your brain as you discover how mantra-like it's settled into your senses. The 11 minute "Talkin About" is next and couldn't be further away from "Intro". It's a valium paced song with a slow strumming guitar and beautiful soaring atmospheric and orchestral keyboard melodies. Olley starts off the vocals by himself, having a brooding style that's not unlike Nick Drake, and when Dymond joins in she sounds much like a female version of the same. The music reminds me a lot of the slowly building guitar driven songs heard on the first few King Black Acid albums.

"Travelin' Light" goes in still another direction, having a cool dance groove, but includes similar keyboards to those lovely sounds heard on "Talkin' About". But the music quickly starts to take on a drifting space quality, and while the percussion keeps things moving in a linear direction there's also a jam feel to the music and the whole rhythmic vibe sounds like Neu! or Can.

"Never Let You Go" is a nice dreamy song with a spacey edge that might have some pop potential. "Now" is the most mainstream and certainly the most pop oriented song of the set. "One Seventeen" is a brief but cool groove and ambience track. And "Police Cars" and "Part II" are the most overtly groove laden tracks on the CD and the ones that go from being dancey to actually danceable, though there lots of fun freakiness that keeps the music interesting throughout. Lots of interesting variety here and Twelve do an excellent job of finding the right mixture of accessible and experimental elements."

~ Jerry Kranitz, Aural Innovations

"Now this is a very pleasant surprise. First is the debut album by Twelve, which is the solo project of Chris Olley. That name may not ring any bells to most of you, but the singer & multi-instrumentalist is a singer & guitarist for Six by Seven, probably one of the best kept secrets in modern driving/ethereal guitar rock from the UK. The song "So Close" from last year's The Way I Feel Today was the most unabashedly sentimental & pleasing love song I'd heard all year. Swervedriver might be a reference point, with big crashing drums,

jarring

wall of noise guitar & bass & the kind of lyrics that just ain't that cool no more sung in a clear ringing voice (sort

of like that fool in Starsailor). Some feelings just never die. First is a couple of things. At once it is an astonishingly accomplished slow-pop masterwork, but it's also an expansive post rock/electronica head trip.

It's not such a surprise given Six By Seven's obvious mastery of production & soundcraft on their albums, but

pretty much nothing in their back catalog prepares you for the immensely satisfying slow drones & chamber

strings of "Talkin' About," again probably one of the most honest & yes, sentimental love songs I've heard all

year. At just over eleven minutes it is a masterstroke of downcast heartfelt longing with epic lyrics mapping the

most intimate reaches of the human heart over a warm billowy backdrop of guitar & strings. This track & the

extended (& utterly mind-blowing) minimal noise of "Intro" are probably my favorites here, & reason enough to

own it. But the rest of the way Olley keeps you entertained. Being from the seat of such diverse body/soul

moving music, it's not surprising that he explores propulsive electronica with "Travelin' Light" with great

success. Or that he conjurs a minimal bit of post rock & drum loops worthy of Hood on "One Seventeen," &

explores the dance floor a bit more closely in "Police Cars." But I don't know. This being a solo project, I

understand it's a time for Olley to explore different venues & test himself a bit, but I think I'm most moved when

he's wielding the guitar & singing timeless pop tunes, as he does so masterfully on "Talkin' About" & closer

"Now." It's a diverse ride regardless & a damn fine way to close out a long, difficult year."

~ Lee Jackson, The Broken Face

"I hate it when I think of a really great way to describe a band and then find out that someone else beat me to it.

It just happened with this record. I was about to drop names like Low and Brian Eno, and then I read the included info sheet press release thinger, and whoever wrote that already dropped those names. What saves

me, though, is that that person said Twelve sounds like Neil Young collaborating with Low or Lou Reed collaborating with Eno, and I think it sounds more like Low collaborating with Eno. This is of the ambient,

droning guitar, instrumental-or-might-as-well-be persuasion (Guitars as texture, you know what I mean?), and it's

very, very good. Exceptional, really. In addition to the spare, haunting guitars, occasional strings, and other

ambient mood enhancers, there is a nice sized helping of very 505-sounding electronic beats a la Faust (but

not as dark) or Neu! Twelve strikes a great balance between offering the soundscapes that can make ambient music interesting and avoiding the lack of development that can make it boring. This is, by a long shot, my top recommendation of the month."
~ Kent Walter, 1340mag.com

"Side projects have a long and checkered history, ranging from the very good (The Breeders and The New Pornographers were both originally side projects) to the...less...good (Remember the early '90s, when every member of Pearl Jam and Soundgarden decided that his regular gig wasn't enough to contain his creativity? If you need refreshing, here are a couple of band names for you: Temple of the Dog and Brad. Wow.). Normally, I'm of the opinion that side projects should have a "Parental Advisory" style sticker warning us of their unique status. In this case, however, I'm willing to make an exception. If First Album featured such a warning label, alerting us to the fact that this the band is, in fact, Six By Seven's Chris Olley and friends, we might be less willing to take a listen, and would therefore miss its beautiful slo-core melodies, interesting techno experiments (and, admittedly, some less interesting ones), and a bit of gorgeous feedback. That, of course, would be a shame. The album opens with the aforementioned shimmering wall of feedback, sliding from one speaker to the other, providing a perfect introduction for "Talkin' About". Between the sparse instrumentation, the unchanging guitar chords and the male/female vocals, you'd be excused for thinking that this was a Low cover. It's not, but it's good enough to be. Olley breathes vocals over the guitar, building a sense of languor and futility, takes a break, and then comes in again with the capable aid of Ms. Tee Dymond. It's a tribute to the song's overall quality that its better-than eleven minute length doesn't seem indulgent at all. Next up, "Travelin' Light" is the first of the disc's two major electronic works. It starts slow: there's not a single drum heard until the second minute, when a rather pleasant, if by-the-numbers Aphex Twin-influenced rhythm kicks in. First Album's other electronic attempt, "Police Cabs", is split into two sections. The first of these is rather slight, and never seems to find its footing, while the second goes full-on drum 'n' bass crazy and is by far the best of Olley's DJing attempts. Additional gems round out the disc. "Never Let You Go", for example, is reminiscent of Jason Pierce's quietest work, and again makes good use of Ms. Dymond. Closer "Now" is the most conventionally poppy of

First

Album's tracks, and feels almost like a reward for the more strenuous (yet enjoyable) listening on the rest of the disc.

Chris Olley and company have definitely established their debut on the "positive" side of the Side Project

Karmic Ledger. Hopefully they can balance out whatever horrible nonsense the next former G'nR has-been

decides to drop on an unsuspecting public."

~ Brett McCallon, Splendid

"What's more enjoyable than having a few pints with your mates down at the pub? Nothing, from what I can tell

from all of the indie Brit films I've seen. Things appear to be mellow there. No need for rushing off to do

anything, and you get the added bonus of getting a bit of a swerve on. Now, minus the swerving part, which a

few Guinnesses of your own can help out with, Twelve's debut release, First Album, has the mellow and no need

rush part down pat.

Twelve is the experimental studio brainchild of Nottingham native Chris Olley. Sir Chris is no stranger to

experimenting, considering he's the singer/guitarist of the critically acclaimed Brit-pop outfit Six By Seven.

Chris put First Album together in his home recording studio, and he definitely took his time crafting the mix of

very mellow indie ballads, with a healthy dose of experimental instrumental grooves. Another Six By Seven

member, Chris Davis, lends a hand with the analog drum kit. Tee Dymond's hauntingly sweet vocals are also

applied strategically, as well as her Fender Rhodes expertise.

First Album opens with an appropriately named track, for an appropriately named album, called "Intro." There's

no need to adjust your hi-fi for this one, because it's not skipping. It's four minutes of 24 guitars inter-twining in a

minimalist beehive like hum that might put you in a trance if you listen to closely. No hurry about "Talkin About."

This is a sparse guitar strumming, even sparser snare-drummed number with a whispered vocal soundscape. It

sounds kind of like if that unnamed band from the movie Laurel Canyon played one of their tunes on tranquilizers. You think the song's going to pick up momentum, but it fools you every time. With a hefty weight of

over 11 minutes, you might think that you would be tapping your watch instead of your foot, but like a Spaceman

3 quest, you're kind of bummed when it's all over.

"Travelin' Light" will throw you for a loop literally and figuratively. The mellow and meandering keyboard intro

starts you into thinking another pop song is coming up, but then the trip-hop drums and one note bass thump kicks in and you're off to the dance. More keyboard and guitar hum are layered in for good measure. "Never Let You Go" switches back to a nearly standard number that has a sound reminiscent of John Lennon's "Mother" (for those interested in history). "One Seventeen" is a little instrumental snippet that sounds like it might have blown in from Stereo Lab's maybe pile. The ambient, techno groove of "Police Cars" and "Part II" follow, and you wonder if Vapourspace has re-surfaced. Both instrumentals are very infectious and very lacking in vocals. Just about when you've given up hope on the sounds of a voice or a guitar returning on the album, "Now" comes on with a beautiful, straight-ahead guitar, piano, and drums mix with layers of vocal harmonies and the steady vibrato of the Fender Rhodes nicely floating in the background. Even though Mr. Olley has given us countless hours of his slow bleed, sweat, and tears, you still want a little bit more. Somewhat similar to that feeling as the night rolls on and you ponder why the Guinness cans are only sold in a four-pack."

~Delusions of Adequacy