

Into The Archives: Jamie Cullum – twentysomething

[Eleanor Langford](#) muses over *twentysomething*, the timeless sophomore album from jazz-pop King Jamie Cullum

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PHOTO: Album Artwork

Fourteen years on, Jamie Cullum's sophomore effort *twentysomething* is yet to lose its irresistible charm. The album's title sums up its appeal. That swaggering, imperfect style oozes youthful aimlessness, presenting a musician uninterested in pleasing jazz aficionados. Cullum tackles it all, from swinging classics to soulful ballads and jazzy reimaginings of rock tunes, with a creative mastery far beyond his years.

There are stock classics in the form of 'What A Difference a Day Made' and 'Singin' in the Rain', but even these have been supplied a savvy twist. Such tracks, though a homage to Cullum's influences, are charming in their offbeat approach. Perhaps his best reimagination is 'I Could Have Danced All Night' from

My Fair Lady. This prim and proper song is fully broken down into something rough, ready and oozing soul.

His laid-back persona and warm, raspy voice show an artist not trying too hard to please. Both the romping rendition of 'I Get a Kick Out of You' and his silky-smooth cover of Jeff Buckley's 'Lover, You Should've Come Over' beguile with their unfinished edge. Cullum is even able to apply a jazz edge to the late and very great rock-god Jimi Hendrix's 'The Wind Cries Mary', further demonstrating his unmatched ability in rebranding songs from a cornucopia of genres.

Cullum is more than just a clever cover artist, however. The album's sardonic and poignant namesake track laments the postgraduate rut which many, including Cullum himself, find themselves in. Meanwhile, 'All at Sea' shows off this young songwriter's burgeoning talent. Bittersweet and nostalgic, this song speaks of lost young men everywhere.

Perhaps Cullum's greatest covers are tucked away at the end of this album. His seductive cover of Pharell William's 'Frontin'' blows the original out of the water, whilst Radiohead's 'High & Dry' is given a new depth entirely.

But, is all this really that unique? Norah Jones has put her striking stamp on a similar approach, whilst Duffy brought soul to the masses with *Rockferry* a few years later. Is it, maybe, a little too easy to throw a new face on old classics? Maybe so, but it cannot be denied that his approach crosses multiple generations, linking the jazz devotees of old with a discerning young generation. Herein lies the mastery of this album. That mix of classics with boyish charm and slick style creates an album that breaks away from the jazz niche, and maybe, just maybe, makes it a hell of a lot more digestible for the masses.



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