**Dan Whitehouse: Raw State**

***Biography***

"I always wanted to do this, but not had the confidence until now," says singer-songwriter Dan Whitehouse of third album *Raw State*.

While 2013’s *Reaching For A State of Mind* was carefully crafted in the studio over a nine month period, the UK and North American live dates that followed it’s autumn release found Dan rearranging album tracks for various band permutations and solo situations, theatre venues and intimate spaces.

“Having spent time with the songs I’d grown to learn their individual characteristics,” he says of the *Reaching For A State Of Mind* tour set-list. “It’s like I’ve got a deeper relationship with the songs now than when I recorded them. I know what care and attention they require, which words need a little softening, which ones need a good kick every now and then…”

Back home after the tour, energy levels were high, new songs were flowing, and Dan was keen to capture the passion he'd felt during this period of intense creativity.

"I very much wanted to make a record in the 'traditional' method, where the performer enters the studio to simply capture/ record a performance. Over the years of listening, I think the records that have had the strongest emotional impact on me were made that way," he says, citing such seminal recordings as Bruce Springsteen's solo acoustic audition tapes, Neil Young's *Harvest*, and Otis Redding's ... *Sings Soul*.

"There’s something about these raw, exposed performances and soulful singers that connects with me ... like a direct line to the listeners’ heart."

Previous releases saw Dan enter a studio with a clutch of semi-formed tracks that he carefully constructed, layered and edited in situ, but for *Raw State* he arrived with a body of fully realised songs, pulled and beaten into shape on stage and in those quieter post-show moments.

"My experience of gigging over the last two years, and especially in recent months, has finally landed me in a position where I feel I can walk into a studio with my guitar and really dive in and do this..."

In looking for assistance to help him realise his vision, Dan turned to Reservoir Studios, the North London base of critically acclaimed British Americana / country soul act (and kindred spirits) Danny And The Champions Of The World.

With a tighter work ethic than for previous recordings, *Raw State* came together quickly with assistance from Champions' Danny George Wilson (vocals, co-producer), Chris Clarke (bass, co-producer), and Steve Brookes (drums), plus Simon Smith (bass) and pedal steel legend BJ Cole.

Such a collaboration proved to be a rare side-project for Wilson, who was enticed by not only the quality of Dan's songs, but also his dedication, and desire for truth.

Says Wilson: "The idea that anybody should ever wear a hat or wear a cape or a cloak, like an actor just doesn't appeal to me ... the beauty of Dan’s stuff is that it’s not a persona, it’s really honest, and its true and that’s all that matters at the end of the day."

The resulting recordings find previously released songs such as *A Light, Come To Me* and live favourite *Somebody Loves You*, re-staged and taken in new directions.

"The recording process can be tough, and with technology there is the temptation to undo, re-do and edit in the extreme,” explains Dan. “Working at Reservoir Studios with Danny and Chris we removed the magnifying glass from the process. I felt confident in doing this as the songs themselves were fully formed, so I felt free to cut loose a little, and simply play.”

Reservoir Studios itself was also a key component in the equation.

“Rather than use digital equipment, we recorded live with Reservoir’s vintage mixing desk to capture the emotion and warmth of the performance,” says Dan.

If *Reaching For A State of Mind* was a significant step up from Dan’s self-titled 2011 debut, *Raw State* marks yet another leap forward. Confident and accomplished, among its many highlights are *Why Don’t We Dance* and *The Painter*.

“*Why Don’t We Dance* describes a couple yearning to be close, but unable to scale the final hurdle of intimacy, while *The Painter* is inspired by the responsibility of parenthood and how everything you say and do influences how your child sees the world. I also think BJ Cole’s contribution to *The Painter* is reminiscent of his ambient work with Brian Eno,” he says, adding: “Having someone like BJ Cole, with his deep well of experience involved was incredible - he's played with so many personal heroes, from Elton John to Ron Sexsmith and REM.”

Arriving less than 12 months after album number two, *Raw State* is the sound of Dan coming into his stride, a mature series of performances that feature some of the songwriter’s best material, brought to life by a team of seasoned craftsmen.

“The whole experience, from touring *Reaching...*, to recording and collaborating with Danny and The Champions Of The World and BJ has been incredible. I’ve learned so much and *Raw State* captures that experience, that growth - it is the album I’ve always wanted to make. It’s the end of one chapter and beginning of another for me.”

*Dave Freak  
(Summer 2014)*