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Sparrow is iTunes' "Best Folk Album of the Year"

"A Stunning Record"

"Magical, Memorable"

"The Beginning of the Album Almost Takes My Breath Away, it's That Beautiful"

"A More Emotional Album You Will Not Find"

William Fitzsimmons' acclaimed CD 'The Sparrow And The Crow' has landed atop iTunes' **'Best Folk Albums of 2008'**. The rueful album, recently described as "A Near Masterpiece" by the Boston Herald, continues to generate rave reviews, with writers describing it as "A *Stunning Record*," "An *Indie Beauty*," and much more.



Fitzsimmons has been handpicked to be one of 20 artists featured in the **iTunes Indie Spotlight**, a first-time initiative between iTunes and Facebook. The standout track 'If You Would Come Back Home' will be included as part of a sampler to be distributed via the Apple Student Group on Facebook. In other news, William Fitzsimmons is currently in the midst of his first-ever European Tour, and has been greeted with sold-out concerts in many towns throughout Germany and Austria.

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Philly.com – The site of PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER & PHILLY DAILY NEWS:

By Deirdre Wengen 11/18/08

http://www.philly.com/philly/phrequency/genres/folk/Heartbroken_Folk.html

Heart Broke Folk

In a back dressing room of the Tin Angel, William Fitzsimmons winces noticeably when asked how long ago it all happened. "It was a couple of years ago," he said. "So, it's still really fresh." The bearded Illinois musician is referring to his divorce—an event described in detail on his heart-

wrenching new album *The Sparrow and The Crow*. But to pigeonhole him as just another broken-hearted folksinger who writes sad songs would be doing him a disservice.

Fitzsimmons, who was raised in Pittsburgh by two blind parents, is on the verge of indie stardom. His songs have accompanied hit television shows such as "Grey's Anatomy" and "General Hospital," and his new record has received rave reviews. Fitzsimmons is also headlining a tour presented by Paste Magazine—which is how he ended up in Philadelphia, speaking openly and honestly about divorce and how it has influenced his music.



"The album is about the ending of my marriage," he said. "There's never a way to beat around the bush on that one." Unfortunately, this isn't his first experience with the subject. Fitzsimmons wrote about the split between his parents on his last album "Goodnight" and was hit hard when he had to endure the same thing in his own relationship. Instead of attempting to put out a record with a completely different direction, Fitzsimmons delved deeper and wrote about the painful experience from his own point of view. "It's meant to be a lot of hope and encouragement for everybody who deals with that sort of heartbreak," he said. "But it's also meant to be a kind of warning for people to take those things very seriously. I didn't take it as seriously as I should have, and I paid for it."

Although *The Sparrow and The Crow* is Fitzsimmons' third full-length, it is his first studio-recorded album. He teamed up with producer Marshall Altman in order to get it to sound exactly the way he wanted. "These songs were too important for me to potentially screw them up on my own," he said. "I felt like if I wanted to get the songs right, I was going to have to enlist the help of people who actually knew what they were doing." Fitzsimmons also recruited the help of Los Angeles singer, Caitlin Crosby, who is accompanying him on tour, to add depth and a different point of view to the album. "There are a lot of breakup records that I love and that are amazing, but for the most part they're very male-centric," he said. "The female presence is meant to be very salient and very intentional and unbiased. There are two sides to every story, so I wanted to represent it as such. Otherwise it's a lie."

The songwriter admits that the material is difficult to play in front of an audience. "When I was writing and recording, it was all very isolated and still in my own headspace," he said. "But when I play in front of other people, it actually makes it more real." Despite the heavy material, Fitzsimmons tries to keep things lighthearted on stage. The crowd in the Old City bar clapped and laughed as the singer addressed them with his wry wit and self-deprecating humor. He even had the audience applaud for the performer with the best facial hair—a contest between himself and the bassist from Slow Runner who had a perfectly-manicured handlebar mustache. Fitzsimmons and his signature bushy beard easily won.

But the jovial atmosphere evaporates as soon as Fitzsimmons approaches the microphone and launches into one of his songs. "Some nights are harder than others. Sometimes it gets a little bit too emotional," he said. "I find myself going back there when I'm singing the songs. I try not to do that because people don't pay to see a creepy guy breakdown on stage." Fitzsimmons plans to focus on touring and hopes that his music will continue to benefit people who are going through difficult times. "It's cliché, but the most substantive thing about doing this is getting all those little notes in the mail about how I've helped people go through something or how they really needed to hear that song," he said. "That gives purpose to it. Then I know that I'm not just wasting time."

St. Louis METROMIX:

By Jason Gonulsen 11/08 http://stlouis.metromix.com/music/blog_post/nov-17th-the-personal/774608/content

With so many quality albums being released in 2008, singer-songwriter William Fitzsimmons often finds himself lost in the shuffle of potential greatness. But a more emotional album you will not find, as Fitzsimmons' latest disc, *The Sparrow and the Crow*, reveals itself through stories about regret, loss, and ultimately, newfound hope. The songs focus on Fitzsimmons' recent divorce, and while that might fool you to think he's using his music to complain about his hard luck, he's really just attempting to say one thing: I'm sorry. Often compared to

Sufjan Stevens or Iron and Wine, Fitzsimmons' hushed vocals and introspective lyrics remain his main weapons on *The Sparrow and the Crow*. Songs like "We Feel Alone" and "You Still Hurt Me" show us a man who only knows of one way to genuinely deliver his art, and that's to shed the cold truth. The whole album is quite a piece of work. The good news for St. Louis is that Fitzsimmons will be performing these songs at a venue that fits his subdued style, the cozy and classy Lucas School House. If you've seen a show there, you'll know that it was made for a performance like this; acoustic guitars, keyboards and quiet vocals. He'll take the stage this Thursday, so come out for a night of serious music.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

By Scott Mervis November 13, 2008

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/08318/927268-42.stm>

Local Scene: An Indie Beauty

A homecoming for William Fitzsimmons

In the music of **William Fitzsimmons**, you'll hear the beauty and intimacy of indie-folk artists such as Iron and Wine and Sufjan Stevens. Not the most original approach these days, but to go with it he has a story better than any of them. The singer-guitarist, now based in Illinois, was raised in Pittsburgh by two blind parents who filled their home with instruments and the music of Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Simon & Garfunkel and the like. His dad even built his own pipe organ. Fitzsimmons went off to get a graduate degree in mental health and become a therapist, but he couldn't help but return to music. After self-producing his first two albums at home, he made "The Sparrow and the Crow" in an L.A. studio. A chronicle of a painful divorce, it's a stunning record with fragile, almost-whispered vocals and moving lyrics. "My songs stem from real experiences, and I do write a lot about difficult issues," he told Nashville City Paper. "But I also try to write the music in a way that helps people cope with problems and issues, and may be even see them in a different light, or at least feel that there are other people out there who share those feelings and problems." Fitzsimmons performs a homecoming show at Club Cafe Saturday at 10:15 p.m. with Slow Runner and Caitlin Crosby. To sample a few tracks, go to www.myspace.com/williamfitzsimmons.



BOSTONIST

11/16/08 By Kerry Skemp

Live Review: William Fitzsimmons and Slow Runner at Johnny D's

http://bostonist.com/2008/11/15/live_review_william_fitzsimmons_and.php

William Fitzsimmons is the Zach Galifianakis of folk: bearded, funny, fierce.

As the Jets and Pats duked it out on the field Thursday night, William Fitzsimmons, his guitar, and his beard wrestled with various foes on stage at Johnny D's in Somerville. Fitzsimmons battled bandmate Jonny in a facial hair contest (the beard won out over Johnny's handlebar mustache), resisted the urge to make more bad jokes (though he did make plenty), and conquered the ubiquitous urge to lump in Somervillians with Bostonians. However, Fitzsimmons was ultimately taken down by a request to cover "Hit Me With Your Best Shot." He and his band gamely played with the chorus for a while, but could not recall enough of the verses—and particularly the lyrics—to prevail in the end.

The battle metaphor is just one way to that Fitzsimmons' show was much more fun than anyone would expect folk music to be; he tended toward Zach Galifianakis rather than Samuel

Beam. However, his clever stage banter might have been the best part of his solo performance; Fitzsimmons was actually much more enjoyable when backed up by Slow Runner than when playing alone. His songs are sparse and simple, but rather than searing your soul like Bon Iver, they sometimes make you wish for a little more substance.

That feeling of wanting was not helped by how much Fitzsimmons' voice recalls Sufjan Stevens (interesting note: Fitzsimmons actually lives in Jacksonville); we spent half the night just waiting for the lush choruses of strings, horns, and singers that back up Stevens' infectious tunes. When all we got were more simple notes and chords, we started to yawn a little. The great part of Stevens' music is its growth and progression; in comparison, Fitzsimmons' work felt a little too static, and the sense of stillness it cultivated was not used to full effect. It was slightly more precious than powerful. There's certainly a place for gentle, sleepy tunes, but it's when we're lying in bed on a lazy Sunday morning (okay, afternoon). We like to rock a little more at night.

Fortunately, Fitzsimmons was frequently joined on stage by Slow Runner. The band's keyboards, bass, and drums (as well as occasional banjo) added depth that made the simple songs more interesting. The group also helped out with the fun banter, discussing how it took them six hours to get from Northampton to Boston "despite two iPhones and a GPS." We're not sure how the band could have gotten so lost, but we trust they had fun along the way.

In joking around, Fitzsimmons also revealed that he had discovered, while tuning, the introductory chord to a Lifetime movie starring John Stamos. We can't wait for the film to come out with a soundtrack by Fitzsimmons. In the meantime, we'll be listening to Fitzsimmons' latest, *The Sparrow and the Crow*, but probably not at party time.

**PITTSBURGH
TRIBUNE-REVIEW**

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

By Michael Machosky 11/15/08

http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/s_598486.html

Troubadour brings songs to Club Cafe

It was probably inevitable that up-and-coming singer-songwriter William Fitzsimmons would become a musician. While growing up in Pittsburgh as the son of two blind parents, his household was packed full of sounds, to help replace what they couldn't see. A huge part of that was music, ranging from bedtime lullabies to a giant pipe organ, which his father built into the house with his own two hands. Now, the grown-up Fitzsimmons has a warm, whispery tenor, a knack for melancholy lyrics, and a budding career as a folk-rock troubadour. Fitzsimmons' new album "The Sparrow and the Crow" -- a hushed, subdued reckoning written for his ex-wife -- recently debuted number two on iTunes' folk charts.

UML Connector

By Johnny Martin, 11/25/08 <http://www.umlconnector.com/2008/william-fitzsimmons-shines-brightly-in-somerville/>

William Fitzsimmons shines brightly in Somerville

Knelt down on the stage hours before he was to perform, William Fitzsimmons is chatting with patrons at Johnny D's in Somerville. The bearded bard would later create a magical, memorable, and personable evening for all those in attendance. Johnny D's is a small lounge that featured an elevated stage and close seating at tables strewn across the main floor and a slightly elevated area on the right of the stage. This venue offers a very intimate experience for both performer and audience.

After a long set break, William Fitzsimmons walked onto the cramped stage, and immediately enraptured the crowd from the first chord. The Illinois based singer songwriter started his set with "It's Not True" off of his new album *The Sparrow and The Crow*, using pain muted finger picking and raspy yet soothing vocals to tell the story of betrayal and forgiveness that is prominent on the album. Fitzsimmons was aided by both Crosby and Slow Runner, with Crosby singing "you can take it all away" on the track *Song of The*

Crow. Slow Runner played with Fitzsimmons for most of the night. At first, the sounds of Slow Runner were entirely too powerful for Fitzsimmons' mellow style, making the song "You Still Hurt Me" tough to hear with a drum track that was entirely too loud. Fitzsimmons said that this has been an issue with playing full band for the first time this tour, saying, "Every room has been very different sonically, so finding that happy balance between the band and myself has been a night-to-night challenge."

Thankfully, they succeeded in finding that happy balance, moving forward to construct some great experiences off of all of Fitzsimmons' three efforts. They also created terrific experiences for the audience, including one chance for the crowd to choose a cover song for the ensemble to play, with one audience member shouting "Hit me with your best shot!" The band went on to recreate the legendary Joan Jett hit, albeit laughingly bad, with Fitzsimmons saying immediately after the last failed note, "That was such a mistake." With the venues set up, there is a bar with large screen televisions directly opposite to the stage, that on this particular night were showcasing the Patriots-Jets showdown. This created some strange moments at the quiet folk show. Fitzsimmons' fans battled with fans of the Patriots with wars over the audible volume that they could produce during Fitzsimmons' closer "Passion Play", the song that got him major publicity with its use on the show Grey's Anatomy.

After the end of the main set, a slow clap brought Fitzsimmons bounding back on stage, saying, "I was going to go pee but what the hell." The encore consisted of two covers, while Fitzsimmons encouraged the crowd to sing along to the song "King of Wishful Thinking," made famous through Julia Roberts' film Pretty Woman. The evening ended with a track from one of Fitzsimmons' favorite artists Sam Beam, also known as Iron and Wine, the song "Naked as We Came." The last note to Beam's song brought the entire crowd to its feet, thanking Fitzsimmons for his great performance. He transformed his sorrowful songs into a fun evening, the juxtaposition of these kept the crowd intrigued and enthralled throughout the Thursday evening. He created an evening in which every crowd member felt connected by this personable songwriting genius.



Four Star CD review and interview from **MELODIC**

by Rickard Holmgren 11/13/08

<http://www.melodic.net/reviewsOne.asp?revnr=7254>

In order to fully understand this record, here are the William Fitzsimmons' own words about the album: "I wrote it first and foremost as a confession and apology to my former wife. It was a way to say things that I needed her to hear that I didn't know how else to say. Second, as a way to exercise the pain from what I'd easily call the worst year of my life. And third, as a way to let others in pain have a way to express and deal with their trouble, and perhaps find some hope at the end of it. It's not a divorce record, or even a "break up" record in the traditional sense, although certainly it contains elements of both. Instead, it's a record about messing up everything, and trying to find a way back home."

The album is in other words not your ordinary folk-rock album. The mood of the record is understandably very dark. However, the album is consisting of both up-tempo songs and slow ballads. The beginning of the album almost takes my breath away, it's that beautiful! William has a very nice voice and manages to create a mood on the record that will make you listen to it over and over again. Like Ray LaMontagne and Joshua Radin, William Fitzsimmons manages to capture the listener and keep that attention throughout the album.

This is one of the top albums in this genre so far this year. The Sparrow and the Crow will be a perfect companion when fall is setting in and the days are getting darker and darker. Very good, Mr Fitzsimmons!

First I must say I am really impressed with your album The Sparrow and the Crow. Tell us a little bit more about it.

William Fitzsimmons: Well thank you very kindly for the compliment, that's sincerely appreciated. I think the best way I've found to describe the record is to take it as a story, from start to finish, about the ending of a relationship, and finding a way to the other side of that. I wrote it about my divorce with the hopes of being able to express some thoughts I needed to, for myself and for my former wife. In that sense it's more of a confessional, or maybe even a journal set to notes, than it is an "album" in the traditional sense.

The theme of the album is really personal, is that difficult to write about?

William Fitzsimmons: I think I've always been very comfortable dealing with areas other people might find too painful or uncomfortable to invest in, probably largely due to my time spent working as a therapist. You get to a

place where nothing is really taboo, and you either have to deal with and learn how to address all the difficulties and trials someone is bringing to you every day, or you have to leave. But while the writing part for me has always had a measure of catharsis or release to it, its been performing the songs in front of others that has proven to be rather emotional for me. I dont really know why, but when theres a room full of people, and Im singing these things that actually happened, it just makes it all very real again. Some days I can get through it just fine, but some nights it does get pretty hard.

What were the biggest differences when recording the new album compared to the previous independent albums?

William Fitzsimmons: Everything Ive done before was done at home, my own environment, my own time lines, my own choices without any contending opinions, and so forth. With "Sparrow" being done in a proper recording studio, with a producer, engineer, etc... I was introduced to the idea of having others really make a contribution to the direction the songs would go, how they would sound, what instrumentation would be used, etc... It was actually pretty difficult for me at first, as Im very stubborn about my songs sounding a certain way and being able to express emotions accurately and effectively. But as I let down my guard and gave up the obsessive part of control over them, we got to a better place with the music than I even thought we could. I have no doubt that without the contribution of Marshall (Altman, producer) and Eric (Robinson, engineer) we wouldnt have been able to make the record what it is.

Who are your main influence(s)?

William Fitzsimmons: Ive always found myself drawn musically to the artists who can actually make you feel what they are trying to say. Not just an intellectual assent to clever words or complicated metaphors (though those do have their place), but really feeling in your gut and heart the very feelings the writer had when they first put the words down. Ive been listening to a lot of David Wilcox lately, Townes Van Zandt, Elliott Smith, and of course Nick Drake. As the record became more of a full arrangement, I found myself craving very raw sounds and lyrics. Theres just something about that music that always gets me and I return to it often.

How does the song creation process look for you? How do you start writing a song?

William Fitzsimmons: Ive been pretty lucky up to this point in that Ive never had to force anything with my writing, or make a song that wasnt already sort of on its way out of my head. So theres no singular "formula" that I go to if something comes to me. Normally its just about sitting with the guitar or piano and playing the chords, notes, and melodies that make sense to how Im feeling. If it doesnt connect with whatever my affectivity is, I wont be inspired to go with it. But it almost always starts with the music, and the words are a reflection of what the tune is already communicating on its own. I dont necessarily yet see myself as a songsmith, but more of a guy that writes while holding a guitar. I cant just pump out a song unless the inspiration is there first.

Which song do you wish you had written?

William Fitzsimmons: Theres many, many songs that I hold with such high esteem that my regard definitely enters into the jealousy zone, but Im glad I didnt write those songs, because if I had, they wouldnt be what they are. But for the sake of discussion, Id probably trade one of my little toes for having written a song like "If I Needed You" by Townes (Van Zandt). If I ever write a song that pure I think I could walk away without regret and be happy.

If you could choose a duet partner, dead or alive, who would it be?

William Fitzsimmons: I dont know if theres been anyone more fortunate than I have already with the amazing people Ive been able to sing and play with, including some of my favorite singers. So I dont want to press my luck! But itd be a dream to be able to sing with Rosie Thomas, or to do a song with David Wilcox. But again, looking back already Ive been given more than anyone could really deserve in that department.

Which artist has affected you the most in your choice of career?

William Fitzsimmons: I think my choice to pursue music full-time for now was probably more related to a lot of other factors than fellow musicians. Not to say that I dont make efforts to learn from the wisdom and example of others, because I certainly do. And Ive been motivated and inspired greatly by the likes of those that always seem to make choices which benefit their songs and their art above so much else. But the decision to follow down this path and see where it goes was a rather personal and idiosyncratic one.

Any chance of seeing you in Sweden anytime soon?

William Fitzsimmons: I think I can say with pretty high confidence that Ill absolutely have the great honor of playing over there in the near future. And I cant wait to do so.

The Groove

William Fitzsimmons @ Johnny D's (11/12)

By Zac Taylor Editor-in-Chief <http://berklee.net/st/media/documents/currentgroove.pdf>

With a beard the size of his head, William Fitzsimmons voice and acoustic guitar playing are as smooth as apple butter. Hailing from Jacksonville, Illinois(e), he indeed has a Sufjan Stevens vibe about his performance, albeit more grounded and at times, very funny. He invited Slow Runner and Caitlin Crosby back on stage throughout the evening, took requests, and

pretended that the people cheering for the football game on the flat screens were indeed cheering for him. His charm and crowd interaction yielded a proper encore; after playing his last tune, he was backstage (the small room behind the bar, in this case) as the crowd kept clapping for more. Fitzsimmons obliged, and sent people home with sultry finger-picking number that undoubtedly upped his CD sales that evening. In spite of the rough-necks at the bar cheering for the Patriots, it was a delicious evening of music.



'The Sparrow And The Crow', the first studio CD by indie troubadour Fitzsimmons, debuted at **Number Two** on the **iTunes Folk Chart**. This forthright album tells the true story of two people who didn't make it: William conceived 'The Sparrow And The Crow' as an apology and a confessional to his former wife...and then set those words to music. The result is a hushed and heartbreaking collection of songs that charts a path from regret to reconciliation.

Raised in Pittsburgh by two blind parents, and now based in Illinois, William grew up listening to his father's orchestral records and to his mother's collection of **James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, and Simon & Garfunkel**. The influences of these seminal artists are felt throughout 'The Sparrow And The Crow'. Listen to a five-song streaming sample here: <http://www.brickwallmgmt.com/williamfitzsimmons/>

Fitzsimmons' story is unique: his initial home-studio albums were made while he was simultaneously finishing up a graduate program as a Mental Health professional, and it was only upon securing his Masters degree and becoming a practicing therapist that William returned to his burgeoning music career.

He is often mentioned in the context of contemporary artists including **Sufjan Stevens** and **Iron & Wine**. **Paste Magazine** (which presented William's recent tour) has lauded heavy praise on him, as have a wide variety of other press outlets. He's also found his songs in demand in Hollywood, with tracks appearing on **Grey's Anatomy, Army Wives** and more...

In an **'A-'** CD review, **BOSTON HERALD** critic Kevin Convey described 'The Sparrow And The Crow' as "A Near Masterpiece": *"Powerfully heart-wrenching and yet so delicate you fear a breath might blow it right out of the CD player, singer-songwriter Fitzsimmons' chronicle of his divorce is a near-masterpiece. Recalling both the cornhusker folk-rock of early Joe Henry and the doomed intimacy of Nick Drake, "The Sparrow and the Crow" makes art and beauty out of tragedy without selling the tragedy short - as you'd expect from a licensed therapist. It's tough stuff, marred only by repetitiveness. But that does nothing to diminish Fitzsimmons' artistic achievement, which is huge and lasting. Download: "If You Would Come Back Home."* <http://www.bostonherald.com/entertainment/music/reviews/view.bg?articleid=1130546&srvc=rss>

<http://www.williamfitzsimmons.com/>

<http://www.myspace.com/williamfitzsimmons>

Hear samples of the new CD here: <http://www.brickwallmgmt.com/williamfitzsimmons/>