



Jacob Collier, 21, sings and plays all the instruments on his debut album.

In Jacob Collier's Room

YOU MAY HAVE SEEN THEM BY NOW: VIRAL VIDEOS OF THE HAND-some, skinny Londoner in his home studio, the image of his face multiplied by six, eight or 12, singing multipart jazz-funk choral arrangements of songs like “Fascinating Rhythm,” “Close To You” and even the theme to *The Flintstones*. More than a one-man Take 6, however, Jacob Collier accompanies himself on piano, melodica, stringed instruments, drums and all manner of percussion.

Collier's first self-produced YouTube video, Stevie Wonder's “Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing” in 2013, has been viewed more than 1.5 million times and, like the ones that followed, is a marvel of technical ingenuity. But all that gee-whiz technology wouldn't matter if Collier's arranging talents were not so profound and his performances not so spectacular.

After receiving accolades from Herbie Hancock, Pat Metheny and Mark Kibble of Take 6, the largely self-taught musician (who attended the Royal Academy of Music for two years) was snapped up by Quincy Jones' Qwest Records. He plays and sings every part on his debut album, recorded entirely in his home studio and appropriately titled *In My Room*. The collection includes three covers and eight originals, including the jazz-fusion opus “Don't You Know,” which he also recorded with Snarky Puppy on *Family Dinner, Vol. 2*. DownBeat spoke to the 21-year-old via Skype from London.

Some of your songs, like your version of Brian Wilson's “In My Room,” play with time in an arresting fashion.

There was an amazing teacher at the academy, Barak Schmol, who teaches world rhythms. After class, I'd ask him to teach me more about certain things, like the ancient Cuban tradition of *batá* drumming. It was a way of feeling time which I was fascinated by: a feeling of a “lack of grid,” but there really is a solid grid. “In My Room” is a *batá*-inspired groove.

Some listeners may jump to the conclusion that your ultra-refined harmonies are electronically manipulated. Are they?

No, there's no computer system that helps me; it's only my ears. When I'm singing a capella harmonies, I don't tune to the piano; normally I tune to the harmonic series. In that way, all of the harmonies are completely in tune.

For a guy who does it all himself, you also seem to find genuine joy in your collaborations, for example with Snarky Puppy.

There are so many of them, but they play together without getting in each other's way. I threw that tune (“Don't You Know”) at [bassist/bandleader] Mike League, and they essentially learned it by ear in one day.

What would you say is your main musical instrument?

That's a tough one; I guess I'd say the human voice. But everything I sing is informed by drumming and bass playing, and piano because of all the harmony. I'd probably say my main instrument is that room, because, when I'm in it, I know how to achieve the sounds that are in my head. —Allen Morrison



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