

Review: Derek Piotr – Making And Then Unmaking

By [Jack Chuter](#) / 06 Apr 2021

“*Things I hold onto make me want to change, but the more I change the more I find myself holding on,*” sings Piotr during “Invisible Map”, his voice perched on a fingerplucked guitar that curls in like an autumn leaf. While exemplary of the album’s affection for a delightful hook, this line also touches upon a duality central to *Making And Then Unmaking*: search and home, flux and fundament. With folk music forming the basis, Piotr’s latest reinvention occurs within a tradition that relishes an immunity to such change, finding potency in the evergreen imagery of nature and love. The record unfolds as an investigation into those deep-rooted aspects of human experience that withstand the forces of change, such as personal maturation and global progress. It’s an assertive statement, drenched in folk tradition and a lavish production, with Piotr pushing pure songcraft to the forefront more than ever before. Yet there’s also a deep uncertainty here. His voice quivers like an emergent flower, the guitars fumble their threads and happen upon different ones, while song structures fall between dismantling and nascently building themselves. Enduring musical history meets the tentative footsteps of the present.

“*Some days I feel I’m a cyborg,*” Piotr muses on “The Stake/De’il in the Kitchen”, surrounded by several freewheeling banjos, propped aloft by beautiful backing harmonies. It’s a jarring line – a knowing collision of sepia pastoral scene and the flickering halogen of modern worry. Such internal instabilities are abundant: “Bolakins”, which is Piotr’s version of [an acapella piece recorded by Lena Bare Turbyfill in 1939](#), has a disturbing story tucked within its melodic sweetness; “Snow In Paradise” features electric piano and saxophone, which stick out from the record’s predominant instrument palette like trainers on a period filmset. Ultimately the album is driven by the insatiable desire to know, which is evident in the intense research that went into *Making And Then Unmaking*, but also within its execution: lyrically Piotr is constantly projecting queries into the future, while the instruments all around him seem to hang open, sustained tones like expectant eyes, illuminating that which eternally seeks in the light of that which eternally stays.

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