

Solo Piano Destruction

James Woolwine

2015 / James Woolwine

45 minutes

Review by Kathy Parsons

Solo Piano Destruction is the debut recording by pianist/composer/guitarist/singer/songwriter James Woolwine, a multi-faceted artist who started studying the piano at the age of seven. He was on track to becoming a concert pianist when his interest shifted to guitar and he attended Berklee College of Music as a guitar major. After college, he rediscovered his love for the piano and this album is the result! Woolwine's piano compositions are inspired by his roots in classical music but also draw heavily from his love of rock, pop, and metal. I admit I was a little bit skeptical when I saw the title and cover artwork, but while Woolwine's playing style is bold and energetic, there are also strong melodies and he has an expressive touch that conveys a variety of moods and tonal colors. Two of the ten tracks are Katy Perry covers and the other eight are Woolwine originals, some of which are bright and lively, some more smooth and graceful. He has a distinctive style that reminds me a bit of Scott D. Davis, although Scott's music isn't quite as classically-influenced.

Solo Piano Destruction begins with "Overkill," Woolwine's attempt to cram all of his musical influences into one piece - an "overkill" of ideas. Some of those influences -

especially the classical ones - are easily identifiable and the piece is more of a montage than a medley. It's a great opener that is fun, exciting, and showcases many of the styles Woolwine excels at. "Ivory Dance" is the first serious piano solo Woolwine composed. Some of the passages are very classical and some are more contemporary. It's always fun to hear where composers started! "Firework" is the first of the two Katy Perry covers, arranged for solo piano; the second is "Teenage Dream." "Meadows of Dan" is much simpler and more subdued, named for a place in Woolwine's home state of Virginia - a favorite. I also really like "New Bach Etude," which was Woolwine's experiment with combining a simpler new age style and some of JS Bach's harmonic progressions. The results are beautiful as well as interesting! Another favorite is "The One You Don't See," a solo version of a song originally written with vocals. With a variety of emotions expressed so eloquently, who needs lyrics? "From Andy" closes the album with a lively, upbeat piece inspired by guitarist Andy McKee.

With a great start like Solo Piano Destruction, James Woolwine should be well on his way to making a name for himself! The album is available from Amazon, iTunes and CD Baby, and some of these pieces are on Soundcloud. Check 'em out!
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