

# Nina Nastasia & Jim White

## 'You Follow Me'

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### Tracklisting:

1. I've Been Out Walking
2. I Write Down Lists
3. Odd Said The Doe
4. The Day I Would Bury You
5. Our Discussion
6. In The Evening
7. There Is No Train
8. Late Night
9. How Will You Love Me
10. I Come After You

Following last year's critically acclaimed 'On Leaving' album, Nina Nastasia makes a rapid return with a stunning collaborative album with Jim White, the peerless drummer of beloved Australian instrumental trio, **Dirty Three**. Stripped back yet further for Nina [to just a two-piece](#) (drums, guitar, vocal), this is a fantastically focused record - a taut, raw document of two incredible musicians in deep dialogue, exploring the boundaries of songform to find a rare and striking complement.

'You Follow Me' is Nina's second outing for FatCat, and her fifth career album. Overwhelmingly lauded for each discrete release, Nina has a way of immersing invention into a consistent style. Having established a reputation as an incredibly instinctive and distinctive drummer, Jim White has become a guest musician of choice for acts such as **Will Oldham / Bonnie Prince Billy, The Boxhead Ensemble, Smog, Nick Cave**, and countless others, yet this is the first record to bear his own name. His first appearance with Nina Nastasia came at the All Tomorrow's Parties Festival in 2002, just before they recorded her 'Run to Ruin' album. He has been a perennial member of Nina's backing band ever since, making several appearances with her internationally.

Of this collaboration, Nina states plainly, "it was Jim's idea". White proposed the concept to Nastasia whilst the two were preparing to record Nina's recent 'On Leaving' album. Playing low-profile gigs together in out-of-the-way haunts in Brooklyn and Chicago, there was something so unusual and affecting about the way the songs came out that Jim felt it could make a compelling record. Whilst Jim had headed back to Melbourne for the summer, Nina took time to decide. Considering she had other ideas for the tunes they had been playing, she figured, "it made more sense to sit down and make something from scratch with our thing in mind". So that's what she did. In a short while, Nina had completed a dozen first person narratives on pursuit (*There Is No Train, I Come After You*), being pursued (*I've Been Out Walking, "Odd", Said The Doe*) and what comes between (*In The Evening*, and Nastasia's *Our Discussion [of The Matter]*, formerly titled *The Matter [of Our Discussion]*, which won electronic artist **Boom Bip** press for his 2005 remix of the song.

Jim flew back to New York, and the two spent a month with Nina's long-time companion and musical organizer Kennan Gudjonsson developing and arranging the songs. "[Kennan] worked the same way he's done for all the records", says Nina, "Like a producer in the old sense", helping strike a balance between Nastasia's delicate structures and White's brilliantly expansive interpretations. The three brought the music to friend and engineer Steve Albini to record it at his celebrated Electrical Audio studio in Chicago. Albini's bent for capturing a bare voice and the tangible depth of drums made for what he calls, "a cool-ass record".

With Nina's extraordinary voice able to swoop and turn on a dime, to shift from a languorous, breathy trail to beautifully emotive peals or a bloodied howl, Jim's highly inventive playing (the word drumming seems a somehow inadequate or lazy to description) is simultaneously loose and lithe, intensely tight, testing and marking out the spaces around things; changing weight from a dissipated shimmer to explosive shrapnel bursts or weird machine-flurries - both functional and impressionistic. What results from the meeting is a series of songs that emerge in a process of almost continual invention. They unfurl and stretch out, expand and contract, always fluid and organic - as though the songs themselves were living and breathing entities. The space hewn out is in flux and deeply three-dimensional, an almost cubist commingling of events, perspectives and possibilities. The more you listen, the more you pick up. With the recordings close-up and sensual / visceral, it's a passionate, emotive album articulating a spectrum (both lyrically and musically) that ranges from driven rage to a loving sensual warmth.

There's something in the title, 'You Follow Me' - perhaps a sort of anthology of aspects of following - that adumbrates the very relationship of two musicians performing at the height of their powers, somewhere between a duel and a dance, where the leading foot shifts from movement to movement.

For more information, contact Jessica Linker at Pitch Perfect PR: [jessica@pitchperfectpr.com](mailto:jessica@pitchperfectpr.com), 773-784-4335, [www.pitchperfectpr.com](http://www.pitchperfectpr.com)

### **Select Press Quotations on Nina Nastasia's *On Leaving*:**

"Her backup is sparse and acoustic; her voice is clear and guileless. But her songs aren't. They drift through memories and sketch stories with a disarming intimacy."

– Jon Pareles, *The New York Times*

"The songs are choreographed as much as composed and as such have a new, striking dimension: Nastasia isn't simply telling stories, she's acting them out, making *On Leaving* a brilliant, breathtaking experience."

– Randy Harward, *Harp*

". . . the New Yorker's fourth release finds her emerging as an assertive and adventurous vocalist, and an equally powerful songwriter. Her sweet, slurred singing voice is set off by basement-style, off-kilter instrumentation, and her songs are sure-footed enough to satisfy Joni Mitchell fans, without devolving into the predictable . . . Nastasia has earned her stripes as a dependable talent." – Sam Hunt, *Ready Made*

"Spare piano and Jim White's gently brushed drums provide dusky atmosphere, but the focal point is Nastasia's wondrous voice, a quivering, ghostly instrument that has a touch of grit and intensity that renders the poetic imagery in her lyrics all the more powerful."

– Jason Bennett, *Nashville Scene*

"No simple genre tag applies to Nina Nastasia's cathartic, vulnerable, achingly poignant style, but the word 'beautiful' is right on the mark."

– Nathan Turk, *Signal to Noise*

". . . it's Nastasia's voice that keeps you cozy, a thing like brushed silver, glowing beneath the scratches. Once again teaming with engineer Steve Albini and longtime collaborator Kennan Gudjonsson, this New Yorker has just about perfected her aesthetic: faintly gothic tales of urban life, a softly sung attempt to remember what's precious and human amid the thrum of car horns and the slush of the upcoming winter."

– Garrett Kamps, *New Times Broward/Palm Beach*

### **Select Press Quotations on Nina Nastasia's *Run to Ruin*:**

"These intimate hushes and lilt would be remarkable even as instrumentals.... Yet it's Nastasia's voice--and the words that it sings--that really sucks the air out of the room."

– *Mojo*

"Spare, beautiful, outstanding."

– *Uncut*

"Her countrified songs often begin as gothic lullabies, swallowed up in darkness and longing, as if the instruments themselves were suffering heartbreak."

-- *Filter*

On "Hear My Call" from the new White Magic album, as Mira Billette plays hypnotic triplets on the piano, drummer Jim White subtly re-molds his beat, changing the feel in chunks in response to Billette's vocal moves, giving a song that's built on what is almost a loop a distinct trajectory. On "Strange Form of Life" from the new Bonnie "Prince" Billy album, as a suspenseful verse gives way to a climactic chorus, White just quietly holds the line.

Among the many thrills of listening to songs that Jim White plays on—the broken rudiments of his rolls, his ability to put the beat in the pocket like he's backing Al Green or pull it apart like a loose-limbed free jazz player—exhilarating moments often come when his intuition leads him to choices opposite those that our intuitions lead us to expect. A climactic chorus is supposed to

get STOMPING drums, but somehow White plays "Strange Form" so that, when the guitars overwhelm him, his near absence makes the hook huge.

For years, White, who is from Brisbane, Australia, toured relentlessly with his instrumental (and always evolving) rock trio Dirty Three. Cat Power opened for the band, and soon White and his bandmate Mick Turner played on her album *Moon Pix*. He has also played with Nick Cave, and has an upcoming duo record with Nina Nastasia. White and I met for lunch recently—he wore really badass leather boots and a blazer—to see if we could talk concretely about something as vague as his "feel" around the kit.

It probably wasn't very successful as such, but at one point, White told me about a new move he had developed, saying, "You throw the drum stick across the snare and it's like

*rrr rrr rrr.*" His face turned excited and mischievous and, referring to his recent (and strange) appearance playing "Strange Form" on network TV with bandmates Will Oldham, Paul Oldham, Matt Sweeney and Andrew WK, he said, "I did it on Conan. There's that riff at the end of the chorus and it goes quiet, so you throw the stick, catch it with your other hand and pass it back. It's like juggling. I was like, Heh—it could've gone wrong, you know?"

While White is right that, *yes it could have gone wrong*, the reason it didn't is the same reason that it's not really possible to talk concretely about what creates his unparalleled "feel"—if it were all based on carefully weighed risk and reward, none of the subtle, fluid, instantly beguiling moments that make White's playing so expressive would've just *happened*. WILL WELCH

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chopping it up with jim white



PHOTOGRAPHY ANNA BAUER

The New York Times

"And then there was Jim White, the drummer. Let's talk about Jim White.

Much of the grace in the best not-quite-rock, not-quite-folk music since the mid-1990s -- Cat Power, Beth Orton, Smog, Dirty Three, Nina Nastasia, Bonnie Prince Billy -- is attributable to Mr. White, who played with them all. On Thursday he tuned in: he watched and listened like a demon. He held his sticks way down at the bottom, raised his arms up high, and let the weight of the stick coming down determine the size and character of the beats. He played simple, unusual patterns in midtempo grooves that were perfect for this music -- not too put-together, but giving it the support it needed."

-- Ben Ratliff