

It was once said that James Wallace is the kind of guy you'd want on your side if you ever got into a music fight in prison. He'd probably tell you that too, just to clarify his position on not getting into a *real* fight in prison. That said, his penchant for dark and clever wordplay above eerily-cheery melodies, begs there are twisted stories from his past that we've yet to hear.

Nashville, as a base for several years, has given him the opportunity to put together the Naked Light, a often six member backdrop of psychedelic rock for his storytelling-folk arrangements. There, he's also collaborated with many like-minded musicians including, Abigail Washburn, whom he co-wrote the title track off her newest release "City of Refuge."

But perhaps it's more important to credit his hometown, Richmond, VA, especially considering the creation-tale of his newest release, *More Strange News from Another Star*: In late 2009, touring China with Abigail Washburn, James was approached by Tag Team records, an Independent Beijing label looking to do "a monthly cassette series for 2010." They wanted new material to release in China on tape, by the summer. James accepted the challenge despite the time frame, and lack of resources. He approached his good friend, Matt White (of NPR's acclaimed big-band: "Fight the Big Bull") in Richmond, VA who'd been setting up an attic studio, and had encouraged James to record. In April 2010, they tracked a full length album in nine days, and by May it was mixed and mastered, in time for release. Shortly after submission, the record label collapsed with nothing more than of vague, domestic excuses ("Divorce, Alcoholism") cited. James, perhaps more confused than discouraged, self-released *More Strange News From Another Star* on cassette anyways. As support, he put together a Richmond, VA version of James Wallace and the Naked Light, featuring several Fight the Big Bull members, (saxophone, clarinet, two drummers, and upright bass) to play a series of release shows between Richmond and Nashville throughout 2011, including a performance at the Bonnaroo Music Festival.

Similar to what has often been said of Belle and Sebastian's earlier works, *More Strange News From Another Star* captures a distinct vintage quality channeled from some non-existent folk music period from decades past. It also seems that each song follows an inevitable "snowballing" starting out small and straightforward, and ending up in a tidal wave of percussion, growling synth, harmonies, and saxophones. Often he's referenced to Paul Simon, in vocal range and use of textured percussion. This fits well considering Wallace's writing showcases a love of African music and Gospel harmonies. But more often than not, his band heads into the more ramshackle, go-for-broke qualities of the early Kinks. A kind of Rock and Roll bred with cacaphony that balances eerily well beneath Wallace's falsetto.

As for the influences in his stories, that is quite the rabbit hole to explore. Whether they be cited from one of his many wandering trips to China, his short residency as a piano player for a small Black Mennonite Church in Appalachia, or an oft mentioned tale about a mysterious box of letters found in an abandoned storehouse concerning aliens and the end of the world, Wallace seems to have a lot to draw on, and that well doesn't seem to be running dry anytime soon.