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# A DEFIANT ACT OF SELF-CELEBRATION

Singer-songwriter **Jack Garratt** is no stranger to accolades. In 2016, he won the Critics' Choice Award at the Brits, and, objectively, his debut album, *Phase*, was a huge success. But, contending with consuming self-doubt, Jack didn't see it that way. Four years later he's back, and building on the lessons of his past. Here, we discuss learning to live with your emotions, and the moment that made every struggle worth it

Writing | Kathryn Wheeler

**Hi Jack! Your new album, *Love, Death & Dancing*, is out in June. How are you feeling about the upcoming release?** Strangely excited, and also scared! I've put on a show that I'm proud of – I've made this record to sound exactly how I intended, I'm so overjoyed about the videos for it, and the creation of the cover. Everything about this record is something that I am proud of. >>>



That's not a feeling I'm used to, and it's a weird one to then have in a strange interlacing knot with this anxiety and fear that sometime in the not-too-distant future it's no longer going to be mine to keep a hold of, but instead it's going to be everyone else's to experience.

**It's been four years in the making, what was that process like?**

About two years was me trying to figure out what happened with the first record. A lot of people would say that it was a success by their definition, and yet by mine it was an unmitigated failure.

I spent two years trying to figure out why I feel like this, and I haven't come to an answer. But that helped me understand that there a lot of the feelings I have I might not have answers for – I might just feel them.

A big underlying theme of the album is that a lot of the emotions I have been feeling in the last few years are – and will possibly be forever – unresolved, and I think that's healthy, I think that's OK.

**That can be the reality for so many people – learning to manage our emotions where there may not be a neat solution.**

That's it – we're encouraged to think that there is an answer, because we're told that our emotions are problems that need fixing. And I refuse to believe that the way I feel is a problem unless, it is harmful to either myself or those around me. And I don't think that my depression, for example, has to be harmful to me.

I would like to think that I could have a relationship with it that is at least healthy – that I can have a relationship with my negative



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thoughts and live with them, in the same way that I have a relationship with my positive thoughts and I live with them.

**That's an idea you can see in the title of your album: *Love, Death & Dancing*. What's the story behind that?** It originally was going to be called *Songs about Love and Death that People can Dance To*. And my wife, very astutely, observed that that was a ridiculously long title, and offered the shorter version, which I loved.

A lot of my creative decisions come from a place of enjoyment first, and they were things that I'd written about in the album. But what I've come to learn is that

those three things – love, death and dancing – are all things I'm absolutely terrified of doing. I'm afraid of openly loving myself. I am also absolutely scared of dying, and I used to dance when I was about 12 until 16 – but as soon as I started to become a young man, I lost the confidence and I became fearful of doing it in public. And so they've all become three categorical things that I'm afraid to do by myself.

**In the music video for the track 'Time', you're dancing on your own throughout. So you're facing a fear there?** Exactly. I stupidly define my music as being 'dance music for people who don't want

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to go out’. Because that’s what I love. I love dance music, but I hate going to clubs.

However, that doesn’t mean I should be starved of a good four-on-the-floor. I like to make music that makes me want to move. The whole point of the video was supposed to represent me as a character engaging in behaviours that I’ve not allowed myself to do for a long time. It was supposed to be a defiant act of self-celebration.

**Reading the YouTube comments on that video, people have their own very personal connections to your songs. What’s that like?** It’s kind of intimidating. I made quite a loud point on the first album of not overly specifying my songs. I didn’t want to discourage somebody’s listening experience by making the songs about me. I’ve done the opposite this time. I’ve been very specific about my experiences. I’ve refused to leave any lyrical ambiguity, because I’ve wanted to be absolutely, heart-baringly, honest.

But it’s actually meant that more people have connected with it. They’ve been able to apply their own lives to a very specific example in my life, my emotions, and my experiences – which proves that I was very wrong the first time around.




**Before you perform these personal songs, have you had to put strategies in place to protect yourself?** Yes. To be honest, I’ve had to do that this time, because I wasn’t very good at it before. The first album brought on some really tough few years for me, because I was performing on my own.

I also think – with the accolades I’d received – it’s difficult to feel my situation was relatable, it was so specifically mine. And then I would go on long tours on my own, and play on a stage by myself, and walk off stage into a green room where I’m alone.

So this time, I’ve restructured some of my supporting pillars. And I’ve found that I’ve really been able to rely on them, and that’s made a huge difference for me. It’s helped me to be able to survive a little longer in something that isn’t designed to be done alone.

**Reflecting back over your career, is there a standout moment you feel proud of?** I’m not one to shy away from a good name-drop every now and then... But one of the biggest things to me, was mine and my wife’s wedding. We obsessed over every detail and we were able to do what has, I think, been regarded by our friends as the ‘greatest party of all time’. But we got to throw that because my career up until then allowed us to do so.

It was, honestly, the happiest night of my entire life – marrying the woman who I will love for the rest of my life, and to celebrate her in front of all of those people. I’d never felt more pride for myself, my career and, most importantly, for me and my wife. Yes, I’d never felt that before.

*Jack Garratt releases his new album ‘Love, Death & Dancing’ on 12 June. *