

# DAN MAᅇANᅇAN

**PRESS KIT  
OCTOBER 2011**



arts & crafts



THE MONDAY Q&A

## Dan Mangan takes a dark turn

MARSHA LEDERMAN

VANCOUVER — From Monday's Globe and Mail  
Published Sunday, Oct. 09, 2011 6:00PM EDT

Dan Mangan's Arts & Crafts label debut, *Oh Fortune*, marks another critical hit for the Vancouver-based singer-songwriter, darker than his previous outing, which included the crowd sing-along favourite *Robots* and won him a Polaris Prize nomination. This time around, track titles include *Post-War Blues*, *If I Am Dead*, and *Regarding Death and Dying*. The Globe caught up with Mangan in Vancouver, in the midst of a relentless tour that brings him back to Canada this week.

**After the success of *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, were you feeling pressure about the next album?**

I suppose I sort of was, in that I knew that more people would hear it and therefore would have expectations. But I was feeling less like I wanted to live up to the last record and more like I wanted to grow beyond it in a different direction. I certainly didn't want to make something that was similar but not as good. I wanted to make something that was different and hopefully better.

**Musically, *Oh Fortune* is very rich and textured. Was the writing process more collaborative?**

Definitely. A lot of these songs were arranged on the road. There's a handful of gigs where we'd be playing to almost nobody somewhere in the middle of the States and I'd start playing new songs that the band wouldn't know, and they would kind of catch up partway. The lyrics and the melodies are still kind of my own, but arrangement-wise there's a lot of help from the guys.

**Let's talk about those lyrics, because for someone who has had so much good fortune career-wise, this isn't exactly a jolly record. Yet you always seem so upbeat. Is this the yin and yang of Dan Mangan?**

I think putting all the melancholy stuff in the songs allows me to let go and be more upbeat and kind of jovial in my real life. But at the same time, there's a lot of intense things going on in the world. And it's important to be informed about those hardships. But you

also need to be able to enjoy and appreciate the things that are in your life. So I suppose it comes down to a balance. I try to have a very positive optimistic outlook on life, meanwhile understanding that it is a really heavy existence that we live.

**There are some pretty dark moments on this album and death seems to be a recurring theme. Have you been contemplating your mortality?**

I would guess that most musicians who have been touring for a number of years have often imagined their demise on the road. You spend a lot of time tempting fate with fast vehicles. Also, like you say, I've had a pretty fortunate couple of years with this last record. Sometimes when things are going so well, you kind of preemptively assume that it all must turn to crap sooner or later. I suppose that's only my own neuroses. I'm also just coming to an age where I'm starting to think about possibly having kids. And thinking about birth also makes me think about death. It is a very freeing thing to understand that you are going to die, and not worry about it so much; just use that as an excuse to enjoy the life that you do have.

**You mentioned when you were touring *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, you at times played to just a handful of people. Is that still happening?**

It's very rare that really nobody's there and in general now there's a sense of familiarity at our gigs. Even if there's not a huge crowd, there are some people who are knowledgeable about the music. It is nice to have graduated beyond the point where nobody has any clue who you are and you're introducing yourself blindly to less than 10 people. Because there was that for a while.

INTERVIEWS > FROM THE MAGAZINE > OCT 2011



## Dan Mangan Lets Go

By Amanda Ash

"I think I've slept in my own bed, like, 15 times since January," Dan Mangan tells me over coffee at a local cafe, noting how last night was one of those rare home-sweet-home moments. The Vancouver-based musician had just returned from a whirlwind three-day trip to Germany's Haldern Pop Festival, a slapdash voyage that would suck the congeniality out of any good-natured person, but Mangan shows no signs of wear or tear. And considering he's been scooting around the globe for a better part of a year, he doesn't even grip his coffee cup out of caffeine desperation.

Many Canadian musicians can only dream of the lifestyle and career Mangan has achieved. For one, the husky-voiced singer-songwriter boasts mass international appeal and the type of illustrious facial hair that makes all the girls squeal. XM Canada's the Verge Music Awards named him Artist of the Year in 2009, earning him a \$25,000 prize. In 2010, his sophomore album *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* garnered a Polaris Music Prize short list nomination. And last but not least, Mangan has travelled the far corners of the world in support of his two previous full-length albums. He's spent nearly nine straight months on the road, not to mention five months cutting his new record *Oh, Fortune*, and won't catch a break until November when he'll finally get to take a few weeks off.

Call him lucky. Fortunate. Blessed, even. But for Mangan, traipsing around the world isn't so much a romantic idea anymore as it is part of the job description. The bearded bard has had to adapt to a lifestyle of perpetual movement, where exhaustion and strained relationships get packed alongside his button-up shirts and trusty guitar. But taking his cue from the fabric of *Oh, Fortune*, Mangan has learned to live and let live, making him one of Canada's most successful exports and one completely down-to-earth dude.

"It gets very real," Mangan says of touring. "I think when you first start, it's all a fantasy. It's kind of a magical game of going on tour and you're with your friends and you're totally broke and you're making no money and you're doing it just because you love it so much. When it actually becomes your work, your career, it's a different thing. It stops being about 'going on tour' and becomes more about just figuring out how to have a real life amidst constantly travelling. How do you have real relationships? How do you find time to go to the bank or do standard chores and errands amid this style of life?"

"Knowing that it's not going to get all that easy makes it easy," Mangan continues. "That's the idea behind making an honest record. That's the idea behind having a great gig. That's the idea behind having a nice picnic with your friends — just letting go. That is the goal for all things. We get so tied up with anxieties that come from the most menial crap. In all facets of music and life, the goal should be just to let go. And I think that's where the joy in the record comes from. It's talking about these things that are kind of morose and heavy, but at the end of it, the undertone, the subtext of the record should be to just let go and then it all gets better and it all starts to feel a lot more manageable, knowing that you're never going to figure it out, knowing that it's never going to be wrapped up in a nice little bow."

Communication has been the key for Mangan, and it's something he says has made him a better traveller. Keeping the chatter channels open, especially within the band — which consists of Gord Grdina, Kenton Loewen and John Walsh — brought them closer together and eventually led to the collaborative nature of *Oh, Fortune*.

Unlike Mangan's previous records, which he notes were quite rushed, *Oh, Fortune* was given some time to breathe. The songs were written and arranged over the course of two years with the help of his band. Thanks to so many creative minds moulding and sculpting each tune, the end product was decidedly different than the typical Dan Mangan sound.

Overall, the record covers a much broader sonic spectrum compared to the singer-songwriting nature of Mangan's past work. "About As Helpful As You Can Be Without Any Help At All" starts off with a collage of dreamy shoegaze arrangements, which then funnel into a single whimsical melody. "How Darwinian" experiments with sonic distortion. Even folksy mainstays like "Oh Fortune" and "Starts With Them, Ends With Us" move toward more layered soundscapes.

"I think that *Nice, Nice* was very affected lyrically by the road — the opening song is 'Road Regrets,'" he says. "I think this record is less affected lyrically by the road, but more affected sonically by being on the road with the band in that creatively, the band played such a more integral part on this record. I have to be careful how I talk about it as being my record because really, more than any project I've ever had, this was more of a collaborative project and there was so much input from these guys."

Mangan's intention for the record was to create a varied texture. Even the lyrics, which often feature death imagery or morose subject matter, are juxtaposed with uplifting instrumentals. "That was the goal: to make something that went in a lot of different directions, but at the day still felt cohesive," Mangan explains. "I'm still obsessed with records. I'm not done with the album yet. I really want an album to flow from beginning to end, and I want it to be something that matters. I want it to be something that feels like a piece of art, not just a collection of songs."

The past few years have been a prolific time for Mangan, but for the moment, his songwriting has hit the brakes. He admits he hasn't written a song since he finished recording *Oh, Fortune* in April. It's a shocking confession, but Mangan doesn't appear unnerved by it all. Instead, in signature Mangan style, he gives a slight smile and simply lets go.

"I'm not really worried about it. I just kind of assumed that the universe would abide, but maybe it won't. Maybe I'll be a school teacher," Mangan laughs. "I think as long as you give yourself an interesting life to draw from, then that creativity will continue to flow eventually. As soon as you give yourself a boring existence, then that creativity will dry up. It's like we're sponges. You can't wring out a sponge if it's not wet."

## Oh Fortune

[Paul Blinov](#) / [paul@vueweekly.com](mailto:paul@vueweekly.com)

### *Oh Fortune*

Dan Mangan Oh Fortune  
Arts & Crafts, 2011

★★★★☆

**Dan Mangan's always been an unusually sharp example of the singer-songwriter: packing clever hooks with world-widened lyrics that seem awash in personal details while still being capable of delivering on some universal insight. I suppose that's really the name of the game, but Mangan's always been a little better, his songwriting a bit tighter and more confident, with more going on under the surface than. Oh Fortune, his third full-length, only further chisels that reputation into marble.**



Even the quieter numbers on Oh Fortune are rarely simple. "If I Am Dead" places acoustic strumming front and centre, but adds in a slow, shuffling drum, high whistling, solitary brass and, eventually, a swell of shredded-guitar white noise that drifts in and out like a distant radio signal. When he does go big—the celebratory frantic guitar breakdown at every chorus peak in "Post-War Blues," the waltzing updraft that "Helpful As You Can Be Without Being Any Help At All" swells to—it proves even greater. **Mangan's skill as an arranger has grown both in size and uniqueness; Oh Fortune sees him pushing his introspective writing deeper than he's managed in the past. and the bigger, splashier moments to newer peaks.**

"People don't know what they want / They just know they really want it / I should know better by now / There's only so much to go around," he croons in "How Darwinian." It's a glib statement, but Mangan's intentions don't seem nearly so dire, or simple. **He's well-versed in pointing out some of the imperfections of the world at large, but his skill is in doing so in a way that doesn't drag you down into their sentiment.**

gratuit chaque jeudi



Cirque  
Cirque du Soleil -  
Michael Jackson:  
The Immortal

Humour  
Nabila Ben Youssef

Cinéma  
Le bonheur des autres

Concours > À gagner  
Des billets pour Taram  
plus de détails sur voir.ca

# dan Mangan

Les grandes récoltes





## MUSIC REVIEWS



### **DAN MANGAN** ***Oh Fortune***

(Arts & Crafts)

There's something about the magnanimous, all-hands-on-deck spirit of Mangan's latest folk-rocker that seems so inexplicably Canadian. Although the Vancouverite and Polaris Prize shortlister is the maitre d', his voice perfectly able to become more gravelly should the crescendo warrant it, this neo-rootsy album feels like a collaborative journey, as if the entire village was needed to enthusiastically exorcise his own dark lyrical demons

**7/10 Trial Track: "Post-War Blues" (Erik Leijon)**

MUSIC > ON THE RECORD

## On the Record: Feist, Dan Mangan, Mastodon & More

Album reviews in 30 seconds or less.



By Bill Chenevert Posted Oct. 12, 2011

**Dan Mangan**  
**Oh Fortune**  
(Arts & Crafts)

**Sounds Like:**

The Vancouver folk singer's second is much more full but still as stark and beautiful, brilliantly employing horns and strings to support his honeyed baritone.

**Free Association:**

An unsung hero, they just don't make 'em like this here in 'Merica.

**For Fans Of:**

Bon Iver/Nick Drake, Elliot Smith x the National, trumpets/trombones.



# Travellin' troubadour

**Cormac Rea**  
**October 13th, 2011**

*Dan Mangan's new LP is nothing like the one before, but it's hella good.*

Don't listen to Dan Mangan's new album *Oh Fortune* too many times, because if you do you might forget what it is you want to say about it. Despite the temptation to smack the label of "another CBC Radio 2 darling" on the Smithers, B.C. native - his songs are in regular rotation, and a recent Vancouver concert has been played ad nauseam - Mangan's *Oh Fortune* refuses to take up residence in any pigeonhole.

"I don't think that *Oh Fortune* is as flashy, on an immediate listen, as *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* - it definitely doesn't have the same sheen - but I'm hoping it will wear like an old shirt," says Mangan. "The intention of it was just to make an album for the sake of an album as a piece of music. *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* was a very charming record, in many ways, and this time around I was less inspired to make something that was charming, but to make something that was darker, deeper."

*Oh Fortune*, in contrast to Mangan's campus-charting 2009 LP *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, possesses nothing of the carefully waxed and polished production of its predecessor, marking a significant progression - even if those elements did contribute to Mangan being afforded a spot on the critic-driven Polaris Award 2010 shortlist. Instead, the title *Oh Fortune* is more than an indication of new direction; inspired by Mangan's reading of the story of Gertrude Ederle, an American swimmer who swam the English Channel in 1920 and smashed the previously held world record, *Oh Fortune* is full of the signs of an artist thrashing about in the depths of his mind. On this LP, Mangan confronts death, employs a sonic and instrumental experimentalism not generally advisable in any pop realm and indulges in some political calling-out on songs such as *Post-war Blues*. Mangan's last three years as a travelling musician frequently left the man between time zones, and out of time; *Oh Fortune* is the voice of this passage, and the subsequent reflection.

"This past year was really heavy on the road; we've been out here since February," says Mangan, reached over the phone in Texas. "It's an interesting thing trying to live a life on the road. You're constantly trying to carry on 'normal' things, like normal chores or having normal conversations, amidst a very un-normal day to day. You try and figure out what time it is back home to call people etc., but at the same time you want to live in the moment. We meet all these cool other bands at the crossroads - more than ever before, maybe, there are tons of bands on the road - and it's really like hordes of working-class musicians. It's like an international peer group."

It's really only on the second or third listen, especially if your first attempt occurs through a crappy car stereo or over the din of voices, that the contents of *Oh Fortune* begin to open up. If the moments of achingly beautiful pieces like *Daffodil* don't first shake your core, the fist-shaking triumphalism of *Starts With Them and Ends With Us* and *Post-war Blues* ultimately will. Mangan's band add brilliant depth to often circumspect lyrics, the emotive quality of the work by these master players, as well as the heady production from Vancouver's widely coveted Colin Stewart (*Black Mountain*, *Frog Eyes*, etc.), creating an almost elemental aspect to proceedings. Dissonance and feedback on *How Darwinian* evoke an oppressive heat implicit in the lyrics; muffled microphones and buzzing feedback on *Daffodil* elicit an audible sense of submersion complementary to Mangan's melancholy. "When I made *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, I had already written the songs while travelling on the road as a mainly solo musician. When I went to Toronto to record, I hired a bunch of players and it worked out really well," reveals Mangan. "But since then I found some really, really good players. I was very ask-y and choose-y when it came to selecting this group; I wanted people I could really learn from. A lot of guys in the band come from an experimental free jazz background, which was something I had a ton of respect for, but not a lot of knowledge of. They've taught me a lot, and recording *Oh Fortune* was an incredible experience for me. It was a total labour of love, and the deepest project that I've ever been a part of."

## CD REVIEWS

## Dan Mangan

## Oh Fortune (Arts &amp; Crafts)

OUR RATING: ★★★★★ BY: JEN ZORATTI  
5/10/2011 4:52 PM



"People don't know what they want, they just know they really want it," B.C. troubadour Dan Mangan sings on How Darwinian, one of the many stand outs on Oh Fortune, his beautifully bleak third album. Coming has the follow-up to his critically acclaimed, Polaris Music Prize shortlisted sophomore album, Nice, Nice Very Nice, **Oh Fortune sees Mangan offer up masterfully written, ink-black observations on life and death set to moody, ambitious soundscapes.** Produced by the famed Colin Stewart (Black Mountain, Ladyhawk, pretty much every other cool band from the Vancouver area), the album has a distinctly gritty Pacific Northwest vibe — particularly on the distorted Ladyhawk-esque rocker Rows of Houses, the driving, call-to-arms Post-War Blues and the ghostly, melancholy Leaves, Trees, Forest. **Mangan's raw, haunting timbre easily evokes the slate-grey skies, the foreboding trees and the damp chill of a sleepy Northwestern logging town where are nothing as they seem and hidden heartaches linger close to the surface** (think David Lynch's Twin Peaks). **This is spine-tingling good stuff from one of Canada's best songwriters.**

## cd reviews



### **Better Mangan**

**The music comes first on this follow-up to a perfectly Nice album**

by James Brotheridge

**DAN MANGAN**  
**OH FORTUNE**  
**ARTS AND CRAFTS**



Dan Mangan's hometown paper, *The Georgia Straight*, already used the best pun possible in the headline for its cover story on Mangan's new album, *Oh Fortune*: "No More Mr. Nice Guy".

Man. As someone who appreciates a good pun, that's a good pun.

Mangan's last album is, of course, called *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, and it really put him on the map when it came out in 2009. (Well, I guess he was already on the map in Vancouver, but you know.) Nice got Mangan attention Canada-wide, thanks to smart lyrics with detailed observations on human behavior - which were in turn fleshed-out with a strong sense of what makes folk-pop tunes good.

Like *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, *Oh Fortune* is on big-deal label Arts and Crafts, which no doubt is kinda a big deal to Mangan.

But *Oh Fortune* is mostly a big deal for how far it leaps forward.

The way Mangan puts his songs together has changed. *Oh Fortune* leaves a lot of room for the musicians to shine. But Mangan's also running a tight ship. You might remember the powerful indie-rock number "Post-War Blues" that he dropped on Regina at this past summer's Folk Festival? Well, that's exactly how the song sounds on the record, too.

Meanwhile, late-album track "Rows of Houses" captures some foot-stomping alt-country that Mangan hasn't gone for previously. And I can't forget all the really pretty, lush horns he's scattered all over *Oh Fortune*, most notably bookending the album.

Dan Mangan isn't the same musician he was in 2009. Before, he wrapped his stories and observations in songs. Now, he's putting the songs first - much tougher to do. It's a great progression.

# Album of the Week: Dan Mangan, Oh Fortune

David Berry Sep 27, 2011 – 6:00 PM ET



**Dan Mangan**  
***Oh Fortune***  
(Arts & Crafts)

The medieval poem *O Fortuna* (*Oh Fortune*) — which is actually one of the few medieval poems you almost certainly know, albeit through Carl Orff's operatic take, aka the song that lazy music directors choose every time there's a dramatic moment — is pretty good evidence for the fact that despair is a universal human emotion. "Hateful life / first oppresses / and then soothes / as fancy takes it" is pretty much the happiest group of lines from it: the rest is basically a cry to be spared from fate and fortune's twirling helix of relentless misery. Enjoy your coffee.

Vancouver's Dan Mangan is not without his moments of dark wonderings, but he is far too happy-go-lucky a guy to let his own musings on fortune's fickleness tumble into the endless depths. Actually, happy-go-lucky probably doesn't exactly capture it, although Mangan is capable of high degree of aw-shucks joy; better would be to say that he's the type that can stare into the abyss and just kind of shrug it off, take it as the sort of inevitable antithesis of the sunlight behind him. And there's really no sense in getting too worked up about inevitabilities. Or, as he puts it on the chorus of *Leaves, Trees, Forest*, which spends its verses in a kind of a swirling series of laments minor and major, "There are leaves on the trees / There are trees in the forest."

This isn't to suggest that he's without deeply felt emotion, just that he's refreshingly matter of fact about them. It's a kind of bald appraisal of the situation that packs it full of so much more — meaning, weight, beauty, humour — than your typical singer-songwriter's over-emotive pigeonholing. A somewhat typical example comes on *Regarding Death and Dying*, where Mangan, over barely audible guitar plucks and a distant cacophony, creaks out "If this is all too much / You know, death and such / What's the rush?" before eventually ending with the thought "Every year when autumn stirs / The birds use their wings. / Where do they go? ... Some say heaven, some say Mexico." The song drifts by as serene and melancholy as your grandmother dying in her sleep, Mangan not doing much more than wondering what comes next, its plain, plaintive curiosity doing a fine job of breaking your heart. (There's a similar effect on the last song, *Jeopardy*, a spiraling morass of questions that is equal parts funny, flailing and elegantly sad, like a preschooler asking "Why?" to the point of existential quandary.)

This is a perspective that strikes, simply, as wise, a fact that is really what separates Mangan from similarly scruffy singer-songwriters, to say nothing of pop musicians in general: *Oh Fortune* is one of the rare albums that is a kind of education in how to be human in a strange and — as its namesake amply demonstrates — harsh world. "I don't know what I want / But I know I really want it / I should know better by now" Mangan moans on *How Darwinian*, and it isn't a lament, just a statement of fact. A cynic could, I guess, see such acceptance as a kind of defeat: the first song here is called *About as Helpful As You Can Be Without Being Any Help at All*, and it opens with the lines "Both feet together / Slowly progressing / Always in time," which could certainly be read as a sort of untroubled float of a way to get through life. But a more mature consideration, and what Mangan seems to be getting at here, is that whatever fortune throws in it, we've still got to make our way.

So, yeah, enjoy your coffee.

## Disc review

by Guillaume Moffet – September 29, 2011



### Dan Mangan Oh Fortune



Offering a follow-up to his much-loved and Polaris-nominated Nice, Nice, Very Nice LP could have resulted in two different outcomes for Vancouver singer-songwriter Dan Mangan. The first would see him produce another simple, yet appealing mainstream record that will be liked by everyone who bought Nice. The second would see him possess enough confidence in his skills to explore sonically and experiment with other songwriting styles. Mangan chose the latter, conferring on Oh Fortune **a rich and mysterious aura that shines vividly** in the beautiful opening orchestral waltz About As Helpful As You Can Be Without Being Any Help at All, and that stands sturdily with punk-like vigour on Post-war Blues and sullenly on Regarding Death and Dying. **Textured, poignant and meticulous as an expressionist painting, Oh Fortune will leave an enduring print in your mind.**



## **Dan Mangan - Oh Fortune**

Arts & Crafts

Published September 29, 2011 by James Wilt in CD Reviews

I've always known that Dan Mangan was a pirate.

In his Polaris Prize shortlisted *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, the Vancouver folk singer tried to hide his true identity with a gravelly voice and gang vocals that convinced most his true home was in a bar overlooking crashing waves. But it obviously wasn't a coincidence that the last song on that epic record was called "Set the Sails," because in *Oh Fortune*, Mangan has done exactly that.

**Within a minute of the first track, listeners are convinced without a doubt that the swashbuckling life is what the brilliant songwriter has always hoped for. Gorgeous strings are paired with brass, flutes and Mangan's signature but refined voice to paint a picture within the listener's mind that they are no longer on land.**

From there, the album only grows in complexity and magnitude. "Post-War Blues" is an upbeat, guitar-led track that clearly takes a stab at the military-industry complex with wit and lyrical savvy. In later songs, he tampers with a sound comparable to Mumford & Sons, which works terrifically (see "Leaves, Trees, Forest" and "Jeopardy" for examples).

Mangan's voice has obviously benefited from the Arts & Crafts treatment, but **there's no question that the man is wisely directing his sizable sound into uncharted waters.** Gone are the gang vocals, but even more brass and woodwinds have taken its place. **With that fuller and more expansive sound, a Polaris Prize is certainly within reach.**

# THE VANCOUVER SUN

## Dan Mangan's (Oh) fortune

BY STUART DERDEYN, POSTMEDIA NEWS    SEPTEMBER 27, 2011



A \$25,000 Verge Music Award, a Polaris Prize nomination, three western Canadian Music Awards, a mostly sold-out theatre tour across Canada, prestige international appearances -- and more. Dan Mangan had reason to title his third album, *Oh Fortune*.

Listen to the Vancouver singer/songwriter's latest, and you'll wonder if he's having you on.

His debut on Toronto's Arts & Crafts label -- home to Feist and

Broken Social Scene -- is a different ride than 2009's career-launching *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*. Backed by his exceptional trio of guitarist Gord Grdina, alternating bassists John Walsh and Colin Cowan and drummer Kenton Loewen, with an orchestra of other players under the baton of acclaimed Seattle violinist/arranger Eyvind Kang, the 11 tracks captured at The Hive in Vancouver are a near-total departure for the gravel-voiced bearded bard. The rousing strumming of "Road Regrets" is replaced with the lush, dense and layered indie rock of "How Darwinian." The entire project heralds texture and mood over hooks and hand-claps.

But is it documenting a downer?

"Yes, there are references to lighting yourself on fire, cancer and death directly, in two of the titles," says Mangan. "I've spent more time than most people in the kinds of vehicles that sometimes cause fatal crashes and it gets me philosophizing: I grew up in Vancouver, travel the world with incredible musicians, have this wonderfully supportive group of people behind me helping me lead this somewhat charmed life that I'm so appreciative of, so it only makes sense to anticipate it all ending; some kind of looming tragedy awaits."

So those lovelorn robots are out and the single is now "Post-War Blues," a driving atmospheric rocker arising out of the "the deepest sleep in my life." Ultimately, like so much of *Oh Fortune*, the tune winds up a rallying cry for those cautious next steps ahead, rather than ever wallowing in trendy regret. The way he's relaying his message is deeply tied to the listener's psychological responses now; less toe-tapping and more head-scratching. Credit the company he is keeping and the way his life has changed with the new confidence to let his compositions breathe.

"I've been the solo guy with the guitar, writing happy music with sad lyrics, and always knew why the music felt good. But now, I'm in a band with a bunch of guys who are very emotionally and musically tuned in, and there is a lot of open dialogue when performing material with them, which found its way into the recording process, too. My musical vocabulary has grown (by) leaps and bounds, and that's on this record.

"All the artists I respect change, album to album. That I've been able to work with musicians who possess such an unbelievable amount of calculated prowess that they can emote in these incredible ways with very little direction means that it's my name on the package, but it's a whole lot more than me. Where will we go next?"

For the next few months, back on the road is the answer. Mangan has toured tirelessly since his early solo artist days, and he has his sights set on taking Canadian success to other markets, particularly the U.S., Australia and the U.K.

"That last cross-Canada tour, we got to see the insides of a lot of grand theatres, and now we're getting ready to do it again. I'm wanting to see what their equivalents are below the border and other places we've been touring. Looking forward to it, in fact."

# Rolling Stone VIDEOS



## Dan Mangan 'Row of Houses'

SEPTEMBER 27, 2011

"Row of Houses," the latest single from Canadian singer-songwriter Dan Mangan, was inspired by one of his favorite movies. "The song is from the perspective of Gordie Lachance from the film *Stand By Me*," says Mangan. "I dug that movie so much as a kid, and recently realized that it's still just as good as I thought it was. Blatant Films in Vancouver put together this crazy visual scheme between green screen live action and 3D animation. The newspapers in the vid are symbolic of the blinders we live in – purposefully so focused on what's in front of us that we can't see a thing – even what's right in our faces. The wind is progress, pulling and tugging at us, affecting the air we breathe, but always just beneath the surface of our attention."

## Dan Mangan Oh Fortune

REVIEWS > FOLK & COUNTRY > SEP 27 2011



Vancouver, BC's favourite son made an astonishing splash with his 2009 sophomore album. *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* brought Dan Mangan critical praise, awards and enthusiastic audiences worldwide. Two years on, it appears the album's wild success has given Mangan the freedom to abandon his acoustic troubadour persona and realize a grander musical vision. Produced by Colin Stewart (Black Mountain), *Oh Fortune* is packed with intense arrangements. Where Mangan experimented with children's noisemakers on the last album, this time he brings in whole orchestras of sound. And it starts big. On magnificent opener "About As Helpful As You Can Be Without Being Any Help At All," a cacophonous rumble becomes a graceful brass and woodwind waltz that bursts into sprawling orchestral pop and then recedes into acoustic folk highlighting Mangan's warm vocals and stirring lyrics. While there's no sign of a sing-along earworm like "Robots," *Oh Fortune* offers deeper delights and songs you can truly sink your teeth into. (Arts & Crafts)



## How Darwinian

Review of Dan Mangan's *Oh Fortune*



As one of the most social media-savvy musicians in the country, it's not unreasonable to say that Dan Mangan reads his own press and so he's probably seen the phrases "everyman", "coffee shop", "roots-rock" and variants thereof in regards to his breakout 2009 record *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* many, many times. And while these descriptors were usually meant in most complimentary ways – one doesn't make the Polaris shortlist on the back of negative press – his just-released follow-up *Oh Fortune* gives you the impression that he didn't take those writeups as incentive to stay the course.

From the very first heavily-reverbed piano chords which open leadoff track "About As Helpful As You Can Be Without Being Any Help At All" before giving way to strings, it's clear that this record is built on a different game plan than its predecessor. Throughout, there's plenty of elegantly orchestrated horns and woodwinds, but also feedbacking,

layered, wall-of-noise guitars – often all side-by-side or on top of one another – and if that sounds like the complete opposite of what you'd have expected a Dan Mangan record to sound like, well I suspect that's the point. This is not a record that can be pigeonholed as the work of a singer-songwriter or folkie; it's brimming with full-on pop ambition and if Mangan had kept such lofty musical aspirations in check before, he's certainly enjoying the artistic freedom that success engenders now.

But for all of that, as soon as the vocals come in it's unmistakably a Dan Mangan record. Not having the most elastic voice becomes an pro rather than a con as it remains warm and comforting like a woollen blanket, delivering poignant and poetic lyrics that; another Mangan trademark still intact, if perhaps darker in tone this time out. And it's Mangan's voice and the words it carries that act as a sturdy, reliable centre amidst the swirling sonic proceedings; it's as if between *Very Nice* and *Fortune*, Mangan was transplanted from the setting of a comfortable stool in his local into... well, it's hard to say, exactly. The atmosphere of *Fortune* is consistent but difficult to pin down, also certainly part of the overarching strategy to head off preconceptions and expectations and forces the listener to consider the record on its own merits rather than what they figured a new Dan Mangan record would sound like.

It's no small thing to shift gears or change lanes immediately after a breakthrough record; the temptation to stick to what worked – at least for the follow-up – must be immense, particularly when what worked was a time-tested, meat-and-potatoes sort of approach. So Mangan should be praised for going as conceptually far afield as he has on *Oh Fortune* without abandoning his core strengths and lauded for making it work so well. If it wasn't clear from any of the above, *Oh Fortune* is an excellent record, expansive in scope yet efficiently delivered and both musically and lyrically rich. No, there's nothing as immediate as "Robots" but in lieu of that degree of immediacy, you get songs that continue to reveal themselves over repeated listens. *Oh Fortune* confirms Mangan as one of this country's best new songwriters and, as a bonus, forces those who'd seek to dismiss him as too conventional to find a new line of criticism. Maybe that he's too tall. Because he's pretty tall.

Southern Souls, The Vancouver Sun, The Winnipeg Free Press and Exclaim have interviews with Mangan and he chats with Rolling Stone about his just-released new video; there's also three four videos from a full-album performance Mangan gave at the CBC presently online, with more to come. His Fall tour brings him to the Queen Elizabeth Theatre on October 28.

## quickspins

BY MARK LEPAGE, STUART DERDEYN AND JORDAN ZIVITZ, POSTMEDIA NEWS; THE PROVINCE  
2011

### **DAN MANGAN: OH FORTUNE** (ARTS & CRAFTS)

Mangan's Arts & Crafts debut is a band release in all but name. All 11 tracks on the album shift and shimmer via the contributions of the crack band of guitarist Gord Grdina, bassist John Walsh and drummer Kenton Loewen and a mountain of guests. His raspy contralto is in fine form. Let the lilting romanticism of "Starts With Them, Ends With Us" with its Radiohead-meets-Mumford & Sons setting wash over you and it's clear that this is one to grow on you. **A**

## Music reviews: Tony Bennett, Dan Mangan, Tori Amos

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2011

THE RECORD

Dan Mangan, "Oh Fortune" (Arts & Crafts) \*\*\*\*

The thing I liked most about Dan Mangan is that he seemed to really believe in his music. This is no small feat.

Mangan never went half-speed like some singer-songwriters, unsure of whether a turn of phrase works, a chord sounds decent or their voice can match their musicianship. No, Mangan plays furiously, and that turns mediocre songs into good songs, good songs into great songs and so on.

We get something a bit different on "Oh Fortune." Mangan still has the same drive, but he also takes a lot more chances with his music and they work.

Mangan has been touring with the current crop of indie royalty — The Walkmen, Okkervil River, The Decemberists — and the influence has clearly rubbed off.

The album starts off with cello and violins lightly strumming away. We get a song that combines a waltz and a folk song with a trumpet blasting at 11. It's called "About As Helpful As You Can Be Without Being Any Help At All." And it's great.

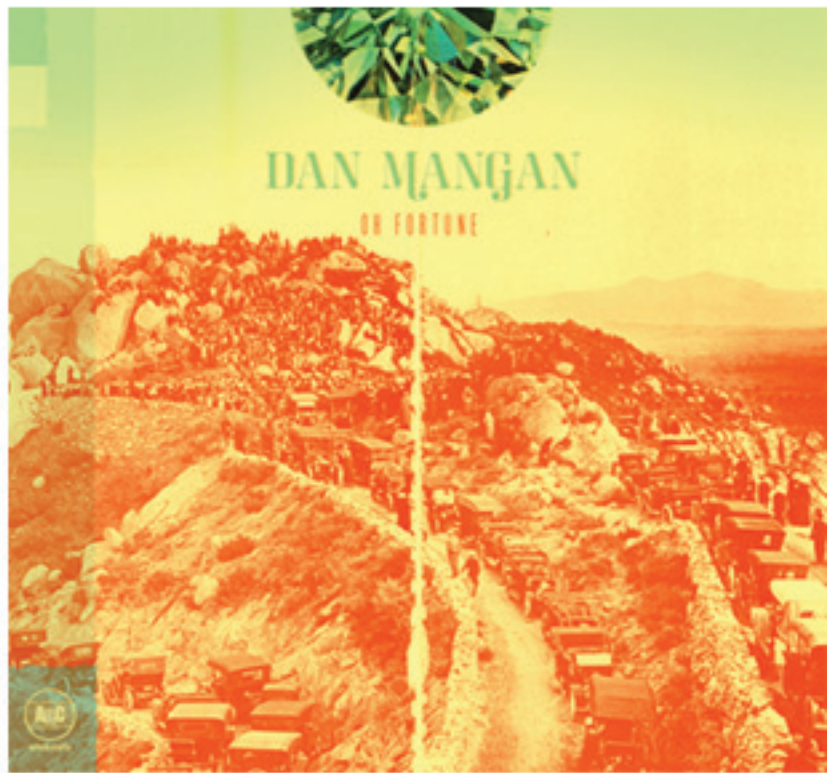
Just as we are settling in to some orchestral pop, Mangan throws in a distorted drum kit and a guitar that echoes as if played three auditoriums away. This song, "How Darwinian," has early Walkmen written all over it.

The frenetic, full-charged "Post-War Blues" recalls some of The Decemberists' more uptempo numbers. The guitar playing and drumming reach such a frenzy that you hope his backing band has some sort of medical coverage.

"Starts With Them, Ends With Us" starts with Mangan strumming a guitar and ends with his mates blowing out your eardrums with horns and strings galore.

Fittingly, the album ends with a toe-tapping jam session, the kind you want to dance to as the movie fades to black and the credits roll.

— Scott Fallon, Staff Writer



# THE VANCOUVER SUN

## CD review: Dan Mangan's *Oh Fortune* shines darkly Vancouver troubadour takes an experimental turn on third album

BY FRANCOIS MARCHAND, VANCOUVER SUN    SEPTEMBER 27, 2011



**OH FORTUNE** Dan Mangan (Arts & Crafts)

4.5 stars out of five

VANCOUVER — “Where did I go? What is this sorrow?” Dan Mangan asks on *Jeopardy*, the existential coda to the Vancouver troubadour’s latest album *Oh Fortune*. “Where am I going? What time is it? Have I always been filled with questions?”

Alex Trebek wouldn’t know where to start.

“Where did Dan Mangan go?” one could ask upon listening to *Oh Fortune* for the first time.

Where did the nice guy with the signature beard and that warm, gravelly voice — the one with the singalong about robots needing love too, the one who sang about coffee sweats and road regrets and Tina’s glorious comeback — really go?

Why so many songs about despair, death and darkness?

To answer that question one must backtrack to the beginning and ponder the opening combo of *About As Helpful As You Can Be Without Being Any Help At All* and *How Darwinian*, which reference the momentary fame of Gertrude Ederle, the first woman to ever swim across the English Channel in 1926, holding a world record and experiencing fame for only a brief moment before falling into obscurity once again.

“I was thrown in the boat/Cast out to sea/Friendly with waves, there were sharks below/Hungry for meat/So I dangled my legs,” Mangan sings on *About As Helpful*, following with, “People don’t know what they want/They just know they really want it/I should know” on *How Darwinian*.

The songs serve as an interesting metaphor for Mangan’s own trajectory: A meteoric rise to indie fame following the release of his critically acclaimed and Polaris Music Prize-nominated album *Nice, Nice Very Nice*, a record that sent Mangan touring the world incessantly and generated enough buzz to land him repeated spots at the Glastonbury festival and had him open for The Walkmen, Okkervil River and The Decemberists, among others.

Cast into the spotlight, Mangan is now swimming with sharks, still only glimpsing the other shore, unsure of what people expect or want from him or, for that matter, what to expect of himself.

This may explain the sudden thematic turn on *Oh Fortune*: Mangan isn’t full-on bitter yet, but you sense he is seeing the irony in his situation, the way he delivers his musings with a hint of sarcasm.



Is he just a fleeting musical moment in time, the title track seems to ask?

Is he, like everyone around him, simply another temporary being on a big blue ball? That question is at the core of *If I Am Dead*, of mournful love song *Daffodil*, and of *Regarding Death and Dying*.

Even the jubilant moments — the Mumford & Sons-esque Post-War Blues and the Springsteen-laced rocker *Rows of Houses* — find Mangan taking a jaded look at the world that surrounds him.

Sonically, *Oh Fortune* shines.

Thanks to the musical talent of guitarist Gordon Grdina, drummer Kenton Loewen and bassist John Walsh, *Oh Fortune* boasts a solid backbone and some fine experimental texturing — the swamy electric strum on *Post-War Blues*, the big drum blasts on *Oh Fortune* (reminiscent of *Nice, Nice* opener *Road Regrets*), and the South American/flamenco-esque acoustic melody on *Leaves, Trees, Forest*.

Colin Stewart's impeccable production offers moments of sheer brilliance and the added help of Seattle composer Eyvind Kang gives *Oh Fortune* some pretty spectacular arrangements on strings and horns throughout.

"I don't know where to place [*Oh Fortune*], and for me that's the most exciting thing about it," Mangan said in an interview with *The Vancouver Sun* while recording the album earlier this year. "I can't think of another band this sounds like, which is the coolest thing."

Yes, *Oh Fortune* offers musings on the darkness of our times, but the album really resonates because, deep down, these are really Mangan's stories, his concerns and his questions, delivered with a reinvigorated wit and a reinvented sound.

# Winnipeg Free Press

The Canadian Press - ONLINE EDITION

## Vancouver songwriter Dan Mangan hopes to 'fluke out' again with new disc

By: Nick Patch, The Canadian Press

TORONTO - A little over a year ago, Dan Mangan remembers playing a show in Norman, Oklahoma to a "crowd" — to use the term loosely — of about seven people.

As is typical of the genial Vancouver singer-songwriter, he cheerfully decided to interpret the sparsely attended gig as a timely break, and not as a humiliation. He had new songs swirling around in his brain that he hadn't had the chance to work through with his band, so the show morphed into a much-needed impromptu rehearsal.

"I thought: 'This is a perfect opportunity,'" Mangan said during a recent interview on a sunny Toronto patio. "You don't ever get a chance to rehearse on the road because you're travelling all the time and you're playing gigs.

"So basically, I would just start playing a song that the band had never heard, and then they'd catch up."

And with that — thanks to the apathy of a nearly empty club and the dexterity of Mangan's band — Mangan began to form the blueprint for "Oh Fortune," which hits stores Tuesday.

You see, by then it was becoming pretty uncommon for Mangan to play to barren bars.

Sure, Mangan was comfortably ensconced in obscurity when he released his sophomore album, "Nice, Nice, Very Nice," only a year earlier in August 2009.

But that didn't last long.

A month after the record dropped, Mangan took artist of the year honours at the XM Verge Awards. The following May, he

signed with the influential Canadian indie imprint Arts & Crafts, which re-released his album in North America. And that summer, Mangan's album was shortlisted for the Polaris Music Prize alongside Broken Social Scene, Tegan and Sara and eventual winners Karkwa.

Suddenly, Mangan was mingling with the country's indie elite. While the 28-year-old had toured relentlessly for years prior to his emergence, this all seemed to come together rather quickly.

And as a result, "Nice, Nice, Very Nice" wasn't a particularly easy act to follow.

"On some level (with that album), we kind of fluked out because there wasn't that much pressure behind it. If it flopped, no one would have cared because no one knew who I was anyways," said Mangan as he sipped a bottle of lager.

"There was a little more pressure this time around. We're signed to a really great, well-known record label, and I have like a team now — I have an agent, and a publicist, and all these things.

"So in that sense, there are people who are anticipating it. But I felt like if we just tried to take something that worked and do it again, it was going to end up being less honest and less good. And it's sort of like, if we fluked out before, maybe we can fluke out again."

And so Mangan changed course fairly drastically.

While "Nice, Nice" was very much a solo affair, "Oh Fortune" was almost entirely crafted with Mangan's band present, and it shows.

Swooning opener “About As Helpful As You Can Be Without Being Any Help At All” waltzes on a lush bed of strings, the brittle guitars of “Starts With Them, Ends With Us” are buoyed by a skittering bed of percussion and, eventually, helium-filled horns, while the propulsive “Post-War Blues” — which Mangan calls the poppiest song he’s written — actually rocks, with a furious tightrope riff presiding over a chaotic chorus.

While Mangan acknowledges that the new record “isn’t remotely singer-songwriter-y,” he said that he didn’t intentionally try to distance himself from his reputation-forming last album.

“I’d like to say we weren’t running from something so much as just aiming toward something,” he said. “But it is a noisier, more subtle and deeper record.”

Mangan had more on his mind lyrically, too. (It would be a mistake to expect anything along the lines of Mangan’s wistful, impossibly cute singalong breakthrough “Robots,” for instance).

Inspired by his relentless travelling, Mangan wrote about damaged veterans returning from war (“Post-War Blues”), about the people living their lives amid the desolate stretches of Ontario highway (“Oh Fortune”) and about hopeless desperation (“Leaves, Trees, Forest”).

But while the subject matter was heavy, he didn’t necessarily want the record’s sound to reflect that.

“It’s sad but it’s hopeful. And it’s morose but it’s totally upbeat and kicking. That intrigues me.”

Mangan has always projected an easygoing affability — his lyrics cast him as the earnest everyman, a role made more convincing by his cheerful, round face and his fatherly beard (he notes that it’s “hilarious” how many times his facial hair has been mentioned in articles — *mea culpa*, Dan).

So given his charming demeanour, as well as his D.I.Y. rise to acclaim and inoffensive tunes, Mangan hasn’t found himself the target of many critical barbs. But as “Nice, Nice” seemed to be gaining steam toward Polaris consideration, Mangan began experiencing something close to a backlash.

In a blog post, well-respected radio host Alan Cross nicknamed Mangan’s record “Dull, Dull, Very Dull,” while the Globe & Mail published a column that called Mangan’s tunes “unmemorable” and ran with the headline: “An indie emperor with no clothes.”

Mangan read that review on his phone while touring, and dubbed it the “harshest piece of press” that had ever been written about him.

Then he wore it as a badge of honour.

“We had really thrived as the underdog. I had spent so much time as the ‘nobody knows who you are, D.I.Y., indie guy’ — and everyone wants to help that guy out,” Mangan said.

“And then once you get to the point where you’re worth trashing, it was kind of an amazing thing.”

When Mangan’s asked about his rise, he responds with a familiar cliché — he says he knocked on thousands of doors before any started opening. But once they did creak open, he started to feel some momentum, and from there, “buzz and hype and all those things.”

“But the thing is,” he continues. “Buzz and hype are fleeting. Buzz and hype, they go away.”

So, how does Mangan plan to hold on? And what expectations does he have for “Oh Fortune”?

Well, with a nod to the record’s title, Mangan seems to think that a positive outcome might require a little bit of luck.

“It’s a very different (situation),” he said. “When I made the last record, I had no management, hardly a label, no agent, no publicist. Now there’s all of those things, and in Europe, and in the States, and in Australia.

“The other one, we were still kicking down doors, and most of those doors are open now. I think it depends on what people think of it. And certainly, I can only approach it with a very defeatist expectation. I expect that we’ll continue to grind it out and play really small grassroots shows overseas for a while.

“But who knows. Anything’s possible and sometimes you catch breaks and sometimes you don’t. I’ve said it before, but I keep my expectations wonderfully low, which allows me to be really happy and pleased about everything that happens.”

## DISC REVIEWS

NOW RATING N N N N N

READER'S RATING n n n n n (8)

### DISC REVIEW

**Dan Mangan - Oh Fortune**  
(Arts & Crafts) BY CARLA GILLIS

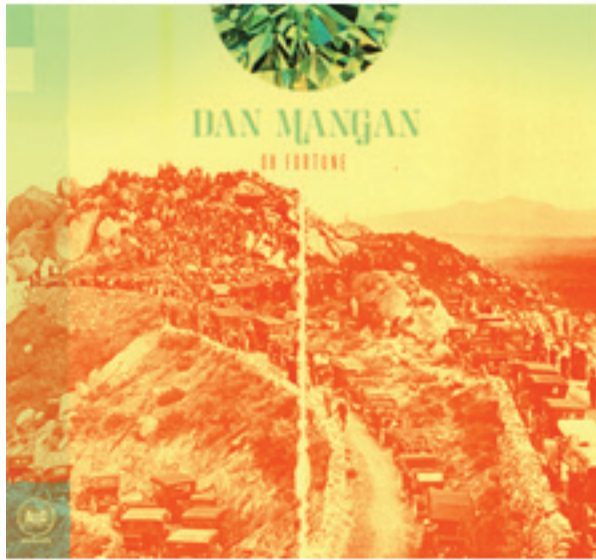
Something's happened to Dan Mangan. With his new album, the young Vancouver musician has leapt ahead not one or two steps, but three or four. At times, it's hard to believe you're listening to the same guy who wrote 2009's light, bright award-winning *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*.

*Oh Fortune* is dark, rich and finds Mangan leaving behind his earnest-boy-madly-strumming-an-acoustic-guitar approach for expansive, epic orchestral indie rock. Each tune is carefully layered and structured and takes Mangan's impassioned alto to cathartic highs and quiet lows (that often bring Gambler-era Kenny Rogers to mind, swear to god).

While it's dense with mood, gloomy lyrics and studio texture, almost to a fault, it's thin on memorable melodies. It lacks a *Robots*-type single, but you sense that was intentional. (*Post-War Blues* is an exception; its zippy riffs add welcome drive.) *Oh Fortune* instead seems meant to be taken in slowly and revisited often.

**Top track:** Starts With Them, Ends With Us

NOW | September 22-29, 2011 | VOL 31 NO 4



## Best of Vancouver 2011 contributors' picks: Entertainment & Nightlife

### **Best grassroots success story**

Dan Mangan can be accused of a lot of things, including being too nice for his own good and continuing to make a good case that beards are to the Vancouver music scene in 2011 what plaid shirts and army boots were in '93. What no one will ever accuse the 28-year-old songsmith of being is an underachiever. Five years ago, he was playing coffeehouses, open-mike nights, and the men's shoe section of the Bay, this being what old-timers used to call "paying one's dues". Today, as the home-grown DIY king springs his third album, *Oh Fortune*, on the world, he's headlining the Orpheum. That's right—the same place that Tom Waits, the Pixies, the National, and Bon Iver find themselves booked into when they play town. At the rate Mangan's stock has been rising, the next time he announces a show, it's going to be at B.C. Place. With U2 opening.



## Review: Dan Mangan, Oh Fortune

Sitting in Vancouver it's hard to explain the popularity of Dan Mangan. Most artists have a hometown advantage--that core group of fans who've been with them since the very beginning and makes for larger crowds than at travelling gigs. With Mangan's last album Nice, Nice, Very Nice the hometown fans demonstrated their loyalty with two sold out shows at the Vogue Theatre to cap off an international tour that saw Mangan filling smaller, but still sizable, venues across Canada, the United States and Europe. To put that in perspective Neko Case played a single night and took three weeks to sell it out: Mangan took eight days by my recollection. Two shows.

Not impressive enough? On this tour Mangan is playing Toronto's Queen Elizabeth Theatre. That last show I wanted to see in that venue was a Jeff Tweedy solo show. Tweedy's over ten albums deep into a legendary career: Mangan's on his third.

To say it was a very good year for one of the nicest guys in the Vancouver music scene is an understatement.

Oh Fortune (to be released on September 27th) is Mangan's follows on the runaway success of it's predecessor with a whole heap of expectations from those roughly 3,000 fans from those Vogue Theatre shows. Material from Oh Fortune was in development at the time and some of it was played live--most notably a barn burning show opening performance of Post-War Blues--so some of this material will be familiar, but there's much new here and a great deal that's different than the previous album.

The album opens nicely with the amply titled About As Helpful As You Can Be Without Being Any Help At All, a quiet waltz that counts the listener into the album and picks up nicely where Set the Sails closed the last record. The waltz with percussion sound provides a clue (and a welcome introduction) to an album that's much more richly produced than its predecessor, and includes the sounds of orchestral accompaniment that Mangan's been experimenting with over the last year and a bit. Mangan's played various gigs where the band has been supplemented (and at times replaced by) a string and brass section, adding new layers to songs from the album.

That symphonic sound may pose the biggest challenge to the album for fans who may be expecting something more...straightforward. It does make the album different to listen to, most obviously when the quiet and string heavy How Darwinian leads into Post-War Blues, which brings the guitars and drums to the forefront again. Followed up with the largely solo guitar track If I Am Dead it can make for a jarring first listen and of the first three tracks.

These stylistic jumps mean it may take a few listens to build the familiarity that seemed so instant on the last album, and that familiarity makes the album easier on the ear over time. Tracks like Daffodil and the titular Oh Fortune (with a killer drumbeat as a bridge) should appeal to Mangan's fans immediately while others may not reveal themselves so easily. The rich lyricism hasn't gone away as Mangan waxes poetically on familiar themes of loss, sadness, ambivalence, youth and aging. Mangan is well read and well written and while others (most notably Canadian music critic Alan Cross) have complained of his lyrics being overly-simplistic I've got no qualms on that front. The album material is solid and there's enough that's good here to keep old fans happy and win new ones along the way. Favourites are already emerging with Rows of Houses, Post-War Blues and Oh Fortune leading the way (the latter is the lead off single, and a free download can be found on Mangan's web site if you're willing to sign over your email address.)

Oh Fortune reinforces Mangan's reputation as Vancouver's leading singer-songwriter of the moment and shows the evolution of an artist whose best material--I'm convinced, at least--hasn't been written yet. It has the feeling of a gentle step forward with occasional flashes of a brasher nature and that, for a third album, is probably more than could be expected of most artists. Give this one a few listens and it'll earn a place in your regular rotation.

# THE GEORGIA *Straight*

VANCOUVER'S NEIGHBORHOOD ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

WWW.STRAIGHT.COM



**+**  
**ATOMIC RAIN**  
SHOULD YOU BE AFRAID? 17

**CARLOS SANTANA**  
STILL PLAYS WITH JOY 45

**ONLINE LIBEL**  
POSTS CREATE RISKS 19

## dan mangan

Vancouver's much-loved indie king gets daring with Oh Fortune

OPERA HOME 35 • BOB MOULD 29 • WHITECAPS 31 • RCMP CRITIC 13

## Dan Mangan: no more Mr. Nice guy

The Vancouver musician is still damn likable, but from 2009's breakout album through fame's wild ride, he and latest *Oh Fortune* hit the dark side

By Mike Usinger, August 25, 2011 [Music » Music Features](#)



Proving nice guys sometimes get exactly what they deserve, Dan Mangan has spent the past couple of years living the kind of impossibly charmed—and completely surreal—life that few in the business of making music ever get to enjoy.

Sipping coffee at South Granville's Bean Around the World on a sun-soaked summer morning, the Vancouver-based DIY success story is happy to divulge some of the more bizarre moments of what's been a wild ride. There was the business of meeting Prince William and Kate Middleton in Ottawa on Canada Day a couple of months back, this coming after playing to a crowd of 300,000 on Parliament Hill.

At the opposite end of the celebrity spectrum, there aren't many who can claim to have spent time with Willie Nelson and Snoop Dogg on their tour bus. Other believe-it-or-not stories to tell his future grandkids include doing SXSW with Elijah Wood, and meeting Radiohead, a band that ranks high on his list of all-time favourites.

Mangan's 2009 breakthrough album, *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*—featuring his amazingly infectious single "Robots"—didn't just have him hobnobbing with the rich and famous. After years of playing open-mike nights in tiny coffee shops and half-empty clubs, the singer suddenly found himself thrust onto a much larger stage, an ace backing band in tow. Think Glastonbury (twice!) in the U.K., Sasquatch in the U.S., and the massive Woodford Folk Festival in Australia.

Tellingly though, as Mangan gets ready to release his excellent, career-re-shaping third album, *Oh Fortune*, none of this seems to impress him much.

"I'm not a celebrity—I'm not some big Hollywood star or anything like that," says the 28-year-old who's earned a well-deserved reputation as one of Vancouver's most likable musicians. "What we do every day is very simple and real and matter-of-fact. We show up to a gig, and then we're sound checking, then we're eating, then playing, and then signing things after. That becomes your life.

"And that brings about new challenges," he continues. "Rather than just worrying about trying to get a gig or an agent someday, you learn new things to freak out about. Like 'Am I going to totally exhaust myself? Am I going to have anything left at the end of this tour? How am I going to be able to sing tomorrow if I scream tonight? Am I eating well enough that I'm not going to turn into a waste case? Am I ever going to have time to relax? Am I ever going to have kids? Or be a reasonable partner for my girlfriend to be with?'"

Consider that fair warning that Mangan had some heavy things on his mind while he was writing *Oh Fortune*, which hits the streets on September 27. The biggest one—as you might infer from song titles like "If I Am Dead" and "Regarding Death and Dying"—was the final curtain call that awaits each and every one of us on the planet.

"There are a lot of images of death on the record, of burning, of grand exits," Mangan suggests. "There are lyrical throw-outs to setting yourself on fire and other grandiose gestures. Lyrically, it's kind of a morose album."

Mangan has a good idea why he might have been obsessed with the dark side, that having something to do with the fact that he's been on the road constantly since the release of *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*.

"I spend a lot of time in quickly moving vehicles," he says simply. "So many, many times I've imagined my own demise—I've got a vivid imagination in that sense. I think about it a lot. Also, the last few years have been utterly nuts—I've gotten to do a lot of things that many people do not get to do. I don't mean that to be taken in a vanity sense as much as in a bewilderment sense. Like 'Look at me singing up here—surely this has all got to end soon because it cannot last.' "

As he's perfectly happy to acknowledge, there are no made-for-the-masses sing-alongs like "Robots" on *Oh Fortune*.

"It's a very different record from *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*," he says, picking at a breakfast burrito. "I think that *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* was the best record that I could have made at the time—it really opened doors for me and the band, and changed my life. I feel that this record is less flashy—right out of the gate, it doesn't have as polished a feel. But I feel it's a deeper record. It takes longer to get to know than *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, but in the end I think it's going to be a longer-lasting record."

Mangan worked on *Oh Fortune* at the Hive with respected local producer Colin Stewart (Cave Singers, Black Mountain), his full-time backing band fleshed out by a small army of string, woodwind, and horn players. The recording process was different from both *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* and his singer-songwriter-ish 2007 debut, *Postcards and Daydreaming*.

"It took me a long time to make it—we recorded it over about six months," Mangan says of *Oh Fortune*. "Every time prior to that, when I'd made a record, I felt rushed. I felt like we were scrambling to meet a deadline. This time we just took things slow, but that was really healthy for me."

The results suggest he was indeed in a great place artistically. *Oh Fortune* wastes little time announcing its grandness, with the kick-off track, "About as Helpful as You Can Be Without Being Any Help at All", starting with ghostly washes of strings and then building from an elegant chamber-music waltz to an exercise in percussion-powered cabaret pop. From there, things never stay in one place for long. The driving "Post-War Blues" is thrillingly flared with Williamsburg-cira-2001 guitar fireworks; "Daffodil" is half haunting Lynchian noise-escape and half double-whiskeyed Waits lullaby; and "Leaves, Trees, Forest" injects gauzy alt-country with a straight-from-the-Caribbean calypso undertow. Mangan and his bandmates prove themselves as confident stomping on the distortion pedals and channelling their inner Crazy Horses (the Stand By Me-inspired "Rows of Houses") as they are dialling things back to a round-midnight hush ("How Darwinian").

The singer is perfectly aware of the growth that he's shown on *Oh Fortune*, the title of which was inspired by the story of swimmer Gertrude Ederle. In 1926, Ederle received a ticker-tape parade in New York City not only for becoming the first woman to swim the English Channel, but for breaking the previous record for the crossing. Old images of the parade would prove fascinating to Mangan, to the point where, stepping back and looking at the larger picture, he sees the title *Oh Fortune* as encapsulating the kind of mammoth events that, if only for a moment, catch the attention of the entire world, whether it be Michael Jackson dying or a man landing on the moon.

"Those events define cultures and societies, and people," he says. "For a moment, everyone kind of turns to each other and stops. It could be something good, and it could be something bad. That, to me, is 'Oh, fortune.' "

If fans are going to find themselves unified on one thing after hearing *Oh Fortune*, it's that Mangan has never sounded more liberated.

"I think my previous two records were easily classified as 'singer-songwriter'," he says. "I don't think this is a singer-songwriter record. It more just sounds like a bunch of people making music together."

That bunch of people includes a battery of session musicians providing the horns, strings, and woods necessary to pull off the arrangements that Mangan commissioned from Seattle's Eyvind Kang, a virtuoso who's worked with everyone from Laurie Anderson and Bill Frisell to Mike Patton and Beck. As for the core group of players who make up his band, if there's one thing that the singer makes clear over the course of the interview, it's that he couldn't be more indebted to them. He might be the leader of the project, but it's obvious that, in many ways, he's in awe of the people that he takes to the stage and studio with: guitarist Gord Grdina, drummer Kenton Loewen, bassists John Walsh and Colin Cowan, trumpeter JP Carter, and keyboardist Tyson Naylor.

"When I made *Nice, Nice*, all those songs had been worked out on the road," Mangan says. "I'd been playing them solo for a couple of years, travelling around on my own. So by the time I went into the studio, they were moulded, done, finished—all we had to do was add some textures. This time, I'd spent two years travelling with the band, so, as the ideas were coming out of me, I'd give them to the band and go, 'What do you guys want to do with this?' They come from different schools of thought than I do when it comes to playing music, so obviously what we came up with was more expansive. Influences of jazz, folk, indie rock, all kinds of things."

But as much as *Oh Fortune* is a group effort, the songs begin with Mangan. If he's understandably proud of what he's accomplished with the record, it's because he didn't exactly start out as one of those Conor Oberst wunderkinds who was coming up with instant classics the week after he first picked up the guitar.

"It's been a lot of hard work just to figure out how to write a decent song," Mangan says. "I had to write about 200 songs that were terrible first."

But looking back, he remembers always loving and appreciating music, to the point where he formed his first band, *Basement Suite*, back in high school on Vancouver's West Side.

"I think our first gig was at the Dunbar Community Centre," he recalls. "In fact, somewhere, I think there's a video of us playing there when we were 17 years old. We covered the Foo Fighters' 'Everlong'. There were, like, 12 people there, but one of my friends started crowd-surfing, even though there were only 12 people.

"I remember getting off-stage," Mangan continues with a laugh. "Like 'We rule! We're such a good band!' But we were terrible."

It wasn't until the release of *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* that he realized he was probably onto something. At that time, he'd long given up on his early childhood dream of being a vet, and was working a steady job as a waiter at the Keg on Granville Island. It was a position he would hang on to even after he committed to packing up his guitar and hitting the road as a touring artist.

"I never really quit—I wanted to keep working there for the longest time because I never felt that I had anything stable enough to leave the job for," he recalls. "I always pictured this grand last shift where I'd no longer have to serve tables, and I could go out and be a musician. Have a big dinner 'cause I'd paid my dues, and then say goodbye to the Keg. It never really happened. I stayed on staff six or eight months after I worked my last shift. They were like, 'You should just quit,' and I was like, 'No, no, no—I'll be back for some more shifts.' So eventually they said, 'Dan—we're quitting for you.' "

Today, Mangan isn't having to worry about going back to waiting tables. *Oh Fortune* is not only going to blow plenty of minds when it hits the streets, it's going to be remembered as one of the best, most daring records of the year. To get a sense of the anticipation surrounding it, consider this: the album is only a pre-order at the moment, and yet the singer's upcoming cross-country tour in support of it is already close to being sold-out for most dates.

As for Mangan's following in Vancouver, umm, he's headlining the Orpheum on November 9. That's right, the 2,800-seat goddamn Orpheum.

"I've seen Wilco play there, I've seen Sigur Rós play there, I've seen Feist play there," he marvels. "It's insane."

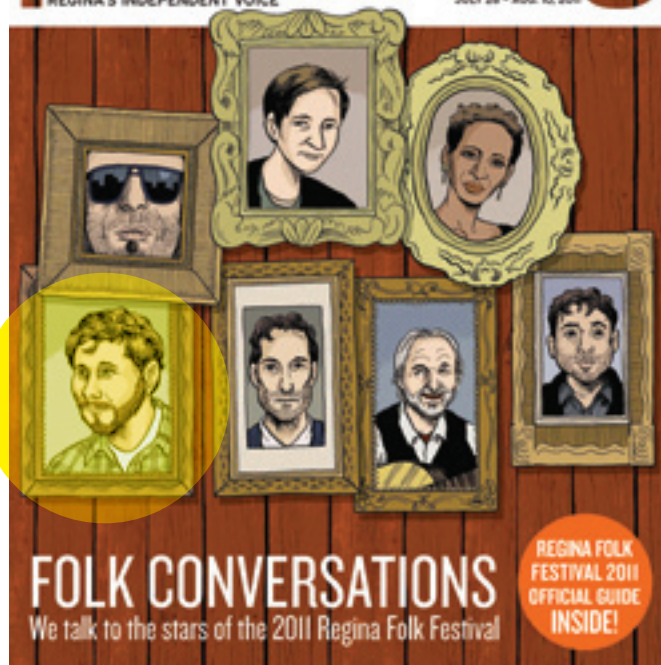
It's also confirmation that Dan Mangan is indeed living a charmed life these days. He may have doubts and worries about what lies ahead as he prepares to spring *Oh Fortune* on the world, but there's at least one thing that he's sure about.

"I feel like this record, sonically, is more 'me' than anything I've ever done," he says. "It's the record that I've been trying to make for a really long time. That comes down to being honest, and trying to make something that's indicative of what you are. When I started out, I was really into the idea of being a folkie singer-songwriter. Now, that's the furthest thing from my mind."

## cover

THE CITY CENTRE PLAZA! TARSANDS! FREE LIGHTSABERS!  
Hot dogs! Capitalists! Comics! Unfinished skyscrapers! Captain America!

prairie dog  
REGINA'S INDEPENDENT VOICE  
JULY 28 - AUG. 10, 2011



## Talking To The Folks

I hope someone ordered a bunch of interviews with musicians because we've got your hot Q and A action right here

### DAN MANGAN

"I worry about people who don't travel and who fear travel, because it really is the best education you can get."

RANDOM FACT: Until his 2009 album Nice, Nice, Very Nice took off, Mangan was working as a server.

Dan Mangan's voice rumbles when I talk to him over the phone, just like it does in his songs. His deep singing, matched with a slight coarseness, is part of what made his 2009 album Nice, Nice, Very Nice a breakout success. The other part was the killer songwriting. Tracks like the single "Robots" were insistently catchy new Canadian folk, speaking to Mangan's identity and his home of Vancouver with great and appealing specificity.

Nice opened up some nice opportunities for the man, like signing to Arts and Crafts, who are releasing his third record, Oh Fortune, in September. According to Mangan, the album finds him "trying to write from a different place not necessarily my own."

The title track, which is available for download at danmanganmusic.com, sounds like an artist ready for another journey. /James Brotheridge  
You seem to have a really good balance of songs with an urban setting but also returning to that classic Canadian contemporary folk setting of nature. How do you see those two settings in your work?

It's interesting that you'd say that, and that you'd use the word "Canadian." I think that something that has been a stream of thought in Canadian songwriting for decades and decades -- and is a little bit different than other places -- is that we are dependent and live from the land.

I think Canadians see nature as a grand thing that is bewildering and I think there are other cultures that see nature as something to be conquered and not so much something to be appreciated. Not to say that here in Canada we don't conquer nature and use resources. But I think in the consciousness of the Canadian songwriter, that's something that's been important since a long time ago.

When you tour, when you're a band in this country, you spend a lot of time not in cities. You end up in cities; that's where you play. There's such long distances between the cities... that's what part of travelling is. That's part of what opening your horizons is -- putting yourself in other situations and trying to examine your hometown from the perspective of not being there.

It sounds like a bit of a tall order, trying to put yourself outside of your own perspective, especially when so much of your work has been so personal.

Yeah, I think it's the duty of all human beings to try and get outside their head every now and then. I'm such a strong advocate for people travelling. I think everyone should do some travelling in their life. I worry about people who don't travel and who fear travel, because it really is the best education you can get, to go and see other cultures and to understand that they're not different from you, you're just different from each other.

If you were to act as travel agent to the world, is there anywhere you'd send the average person?

I don't know; there's a lot of cool things on this planet. You could go to Northern Australia and see some incredible beaches but you could also go to Prague and see some cool buildings. And somewhere in between, you can see a whole bunch of different ways of life. What some people see as normal, some other people see as crazy. I think it's not about adopting another person's culture. It's about getting your head around the idea that it's okay.

## Pop

### Dan Mangan St Pancras Old Church, NW1

★★★★☆

In his homeland of Canada, Dan Mangan has slogged his way to success. Since self-releasing his debut album in 2005, the 28-year-old has toured non-stop. His second album, *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, first came out in 2009, but took off only after a rerelease last year on the hip Canadian label Arts & Crafts and a nomination for Canada's highly regarded Polaris Prize.

In the UK, Mangan has yet to break through, despite rave reviews for *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* on its release here last autumn. That could soon change, however — one of his catchiest songs,

*Sold*, comes out as a single next month and he plays Glastonbury's Other Stage on Sunday. If he is as entertaining there as he was at the first of two shows at St Pancras Old Church, he should pick up plenty of new fans.

From the moment Mangan arrived, his shirt sleeves rolled up, ready for action, his ease on stage was obvious. A fabulous, five-piece backing band included a female trombonist and female French Horn player and blokes on double bass, drums and semi-acoustic guitar. That Mangan started with *Sold* was bold. That in over an hour, his set didn't slump once was

hugely impressive. His chat between songs was hilarious. When the church bells unexpectedly tolled at 10pm, he recalled a gig in Dubai that was cut off by a call to prayer. His description of discovering that his "Camp Mangan" T-shirts had a different meaning in Britain was the stuff of a seasoned stand-up.

It was the quality of the songs that stole the show though. *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* is a misleading title — it was borrowed from Kurt Vonnegut — for an album of songs with wry, razor-sharp, self-observational lyrics and arrangements that are deceptively

complex. *Live, Sold* and *Fair Verona* galloped along, the former pausing for a full band-led handclap break. *The Indie Queens are Waiting* was accompanied only by double bass and high backing vocals from two male band members. *You Silly Git* recalled his label-mates Stars and Basket was a bit Villagers.

Mangan's third album, *Oh Fortune*, is due soon. From it came a chaotically great *Post War Blues* and a fun, rowdy number called *Row of Houses*, inspired by the film *Stand By Me*. By its release, Mangan deserves to be as well known here as he is at home.

Lisa Verrico

By Josh Darr

# Sasquatch Interviews and Portraits



**The Sasquatch artists pictured below were asked to answer these two questions:**

1. If you were to choose a fictional character in any medium (literature, film, tv etc..) to best liken yourself to, who would it be and why?
2. If you were to create an image or paint a picture to best describe your music to someone unfamiliar with it, what would it be?

**Check out their answers and a gallery of their portraits (photographed by Josh Darr) below.**

## **Dan Mangan**

1. Wow...one of my favorite characters and is kind of topical I named the last album after him...Bokonon a false idol in Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*. I've also been told I look like Grover, but I don't remember what his personality was like.
2. Something to do with a bird eating it's own nest and then regurgitating it for its young.

Kaiser Chiefs:  
Ricky Wilson.

{sunday}



26.06.11

## OTHER STAGE

**M**uddy graffiti daubed on the siding reads: "Caution: wet poo." Happily, Canadian **Dan Mangan** and his band scare the circling seagulls away with their hard-edged hoedown rock. The lyrics to the political Post War Blues pack a punch even mightier than those issued to the bass drum. At the end of an impressive set, a member of the audience rewards the gregarious Mangan with a delicious 99 cone.

**Clare Maguire** brightens the place up with red roses, big pop anthems and a short and sweet cover of Sister Rosetta Tharp's *Trouble In Mind*. Big hits like *Last Dance* go down a storm, but the rest suggests she can't decide whether she'd rather be Stevie Nicks or Christina Aguilera.

The soulful vibe continues with **Cold War Kids**, whose *We Used To Vacation* is powerful and – for a song about a recovering alcoholic – surprisingly uplifting. The funk-

rock foursome's sure-footed set suggests that, like The National, they're a US band who'll find mega-success via the long way. **DS**

Led by the bright-eyed and bushy-tailed (literally, in the case of today's attire) Shingai Shoniwa, **Noisettes** roll out a colourful tombola of pop, soul and dance

have returned to amplification after an acoustic spell. The Crouch Enders duly revive heat-stricken bodies with twitchy selections from their imminent third album.

**TV On The Radio** deliver a set perfectly judged to banish any late-afternoon lethargy. Tunde Adebimpe is an authoritative presence, whether he's pogoing maniacally through *Dancing Chose* or crooning an elegiac beauty into luminous ballad *Province*. *Staring At The Sun* is jacked up to techno tempo and

*"TV On The Radio close with a glorious cover of the Ghostbusters theme."*

numbers. Shoniwa climbs a scaffold in bare feet, hanging upside down to sing, then rides on a security guard's shoulders to high five the front row.

Competent indie poshos **Bombay Bicycle Club**

Oy vell: **Clare Maguire.**

received by a sea of raised arms, building momentum to their inspired finale: a glorious, grooveadelic cover of the *Ghostbusters* theme.

Someone died today, so morbidly inclined **Eels** mainman Mark 'E' Everett should be in his element. He puts in a mature, full-bearded performance, downcast lyrics balanced by some well-crafted tuneage. **MAG**

Formerly, of course, a Blur tribute band, Kaiser Chiefs now appear to be mutating into The Who. The fivesome utterly lob themselves at their set, particularly



To the bitter Crouch End: **Bombay Bicycle Club.**

in the selections from current pick'n'mix LP, *The Future Is Medieval*. But it's the up-and-at-'em oldies - *Ruby*, *Oh My God*, *I Predict A Riot* - that really get everyone going.

Arguably the most rocktastic Other Stage headliners ever, **Queens Of The Stone Age** turn in a remarkable set of grinding riffage, with a spectacularly slinky *No One Knows* topped only by *Feel Good Hit Of The Summer*'s raw-lunged chant of "Nicotine, valium, vicodin, marijuana, ecstasy and alcohol." Something for everyone, then, as we head into the night. **TD**



## Dan Mangan: Dan Mangan's folk implosion

by André Péloquin – April 28, 2011 [3 comments →](#)



*Vancouver's folk wonder Dan Mangan talks about death, Céline Dion and brushing up on his French.*

Dan Mangan has a lot on his mind these days. "I've been thinking quite a bit about death and what dying means," he ponders over the phone, right before explaining himself. "There's times when I'm travelling, I'll let my imagination go wild. If I'm on a train, or something like that, I'll picture it going off the rails." A figure of speech that, somehow, could also be applied to Mangan's upcoming effort.

While his second CD, *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, got him opportunities to tour Canada, the United States and Europe, in addition to nu-

merous honours (three Western Canadian Music Awards, a Verge Music Award, a Polaris nomination, etc.), Mangan is throwing it all away on his next album, slated to be released in September on Arts & Crafts.

Recorded with his band between tours, the singer-songwriter's next offering will be more collaborative and rely more on fiction than personal experiences. "For me, for my own mental health, when it comes to creating things, it's really important to change, to evolve," Mangan explains. "The perspective changed a little bit." Inevitably, his music has too.

In a recent interview with the *Vancouver Sun*, he confided that he was looking forward to shedding his "solo dude with a guitar vibe." In a video posted on his website, fans can catch a string trio recording a blooming melody that strays from the intimate folk genre Mangan is mostly known for. In another teaser, he is seen, along with his musicians, trying to hit "the Céline Dion note" (the band's words, not mine!) while recording gang vocals for a song entitled *Rows of Houses*. Mangan lets fans, and journalists, speculate about the shape and sound of his forthcoming LP, but he still assured us that "it probably won't sound like a Céline Dion record... But if we could have her record sales, we'd be happy!"

During their summer tour, Dan and his comrades will furrow Quebec's highways and back roads. In addition to the mandatory Montreal and Quebec stops, they'll also be seen in smaller cities like Sorel. "By the time I leave, I want my French to get better and to keep it," wishes Mangan, referring to his past experience as a camp counsellor at Camp Trois-Saumons, which is located between Montmagny and Rimouski (where he will actually start his Quebec tour). "But it will be hard to keep it, and to practise it, when I get back to Vancouver!"



# THE SUNDAY TIMES

## Pop, rock and jazz

Reviews by

POP, ROCK, JAZZ

**Mark Edwards,  
Dan Cairns,  
Stewart Lee and  
Clive Davis**

**DAN MANGAN**



**Nice, Nice, Very Nice**

Arts and Crafts ACS055



Dan Mangan is a singer-songwriter from Canada whose second album arrives on the Arts and Crafts label – home to Broken

Social Scene, Feist and Stars, and almost invariably a guarantee of superior quality. Released last year in his homeland, *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* met with pretty much universal acclaim, one Canadian critic simply declaring that the songs were “indescribably good”. Let’s try, though, shall we? Mangan’s songs favour acoustic guitars, subtly yearning vocals and carefully observed lyrics. Horns and strings are employed liberally, but always with imagination. Rhythms stop, start, slow down and speed up again – but when they can make up their mind, they prefer to shuffle. The resulting mix should please fans of Josh Ritter or Badly Drawn Boy. **ME**



## CEE LO GREEN

*The Lady Killer*

(Warner Bros)

★★★★☆

This concept solo album from the Gnarls Barkley singer is quite a brave move, placing him at the centre of the album's narrative as the lady killer himself. *Bright Lights Bigger City* is all anticipatory lust as Green's soulful squawk sings of all the possibilities of a Saturday night on the town while a *Billie Jean* bassline drives the melody. *Forget You* is the clean version of his massive hit *F\*\* You* which appears again later, uncensored. The PG version doesn't carry the same impact but it's a decent compromise of a breezy pop song wrapped up in old Motown tricks. Invoking the jazz-blues ghosts of New Orleans' Bourbon Street, *Bodies* is a brilliantly dark murder anthem with smoky trumpets and a subdued double bass adding plenty of drama. Overall though, Green's songs are upbeat and full of energy. Turning his hand to R&B, soul and bluesy ballads here, Green's album isn't as diverse as Outkast's similarly conceptual work but he offers plenty of entertainment.

LIANNE STEINBERG



## KATE RUSBY

*Make The Light*

(Pure Records)

★★★★☆

Known for her interpretations of traditional folk songs, Rusby's Yorkshire twang is at the forefront of these original tracks. Beginning with upbeat Celtic sounds on *The Wishing Wife*, Rusby hasn't strayed too far from her folk origins. Backed by banjo, there's a fun feel to the song. The lovelorn ballad *Lately* pushes Rusby's voice up in the mix, backed only by acoustic guitars and a mournful melodeon. There's a timeless optimism to Rusby's songs, exemplified on *Green Fields* where she sings of "better times/of better things" in a brilliant falsetto.



## DAN MANGAN

*Nice, Nice, Very Nice*

(ABC)

★★★★☆

The world-weary, hard-touring Canadian songwriter's second album is an engrossing emotive effort. *Road Regrets* spins out in one take, getting faster and more frantic as it progresses, with no concern for the confines of an even-handed pop song structure. *The Indie Queens Are Waiting* showcases the soft female vocals of Veda Hille intertwined with Mangan's as his lyrics speak of warm coffee in old diners. *You Silly Git* may be the oddest title for a beautiful folk song that features violins and brushed drums. He's not a household name but he's worth discovering.



## DAVID E SUGAR

*Memory Store*

(Sunday Best)

★★★★☆

A pioneer on the electronica scene, Sugar's debut album utilises his abilities not only behind the laptop but on vocals, guitars and drums. His shouty indie boy vocals are best utilised on the spacey, scratchy *Flea Market* and the song's summery flow is reminiscent of *The Sea And Cake* and *Isotope 217*'s experimental splendour. *Party Killer* combines funky guitar lines with James Murphy-style hall-shouted vocals and the comedown arrives with *Although You May Laugh* which is all sleepy-eyed singing and long drawn-out synth notes.



## Q&A: The Green Children

The Green Children are Milla Sunde and Marlow Bevan, who have just released their debut album *Encounter*. Sunde discusses how they met and why they've established a charitable foundation in their name.

**You both attended LIPA. Why did you choose Liverpool rather than London?**

LIPA was like an mini-entertainment industry all under one roof, a magical place full of talented and colourful people. Choosing to do music as a career is obviously not the safest path and I do feel the school provided us with a very good start. We actually met in our first song-writing class.

**Was it a bit like learning to drive in that you don't really know your own style and bad habits until you're let loose on the world?**

I think most people at LIPA were individuals, many of whom already had a clear musical direction. For us, there was definitely a learning phase. We were in several different bands together, trying to find the right sound, and eventually decided to become a duo. We were gigging a lot, trying not to stay inside the school's safety bubble. LIPA definitely gave us time to figure out which bad habits we wanted to drop.

**Do you prefer playing with electronic sounds?**

We are very imaginative people and have always wanted to make music that takes people on a magical journey. We feel that the electronic side possesses more of that otherworldly flavour. We do love acoustic instruments, particularly those with an ethnic twist, and plan to use them more in the next album.

**Why did you decide to get involved with charitable projects in Bangladesh and India?**

We established our foundation in 2005 after visiting the micro-lending projects of Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. Once we'd met the poor women developing small businesses through the use of small loans we were incredibly inspired. We were lucky enough to meet Prof Muhammad Yunus during this trip, who is the founder of the whole movement that has helped over seven million women in his country. After leaving, we wrote a new song and then went back to make a music video in the villages. Our hope was to shine some more light on the great work being done there and three months later Prof Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize.

LIANNE STEINBERG

THE  
**LIST**

**ALSO RELEASED**

**Traquair**

*The Disposability of  
an Arrogant Age*

(Levelled) ●●●○○

1960s-style folky protest songs with an air of Woodstock-ish authenticity – there's even a sitar on there. References to modern life are therefore a bit jarring, but maybe that's the point?

**Dan Mangan**

*Nice, Nice, Very  
Nice (Arts & Crafts)*

●●●●● Folksy

Americana with a powerful emotional undercurrent, on the label that brought us Feist and Broken Social Scene.

Penultimate track 'Basket' is especially forceful, raging as it does against the dying of the light.



# EXPRESS.co.uk

Home of the Daily and Sunday Express

## OUT TOMORROW ON CD

**NICE, NICE, VERY NICE** ★★★★★

**Dan Mangan** (Arts & Crafts)

As the grim kangaroo-court that is the X Factor lurches on, the proper, grown up music business continues to pick out the real gems. Dan Mangan a robust, have-guitar will-travel Canadian makes a variety of effortlessly melodic indie rock that borrows a little quirkiness from The Kinks (the single Robots) and a dreaminess from Scott Matthews but still sounds original. **MT**

## Rock & pop reviews

### Dan Mangan

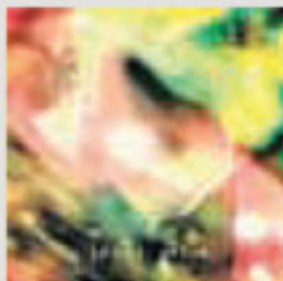
Nice, Nice, Very Nice



(Arts & Crafts)

This 27-year-old Vancouver singer-songwriter took the old-fashioned route to stardom: growing his fan base by playing every gig possible. Five years after his debut album, Mangan's long game seems to be paying off. He's won awards by the trolleyload in his homeland, including a shortlisting for the Polaris (Canada's version of the Mercury). Backed by acoustic guitar and trumpets, Mangan's voice is the sort of thing you cuddle up to only to find it bristly, and his songs are much the same. In the crowded male singer-songwriter genre, he brings something different: a quirky, witty, observational style coupled with a slow-burning, emotional intensity. The Indie Queens Are Waiting turns a trip to a record store to impress a girl into a sideswipe at the obsession with cool. In the wonderful singalong Robots, he plays a customer service operative who becomes emotionally involved with a stream of sad, rejected goods. An album of offbeat, thoughtful, funny and understated little gems. **Dave Simpson**

## Album reviews



**Jónsi: Go Live (CD + DVD)** (Parlophone) £17.99  
“Can’t believe you aren’t watching Eurovision tonight,” cracks Jónsi. Sigur Rós’s singer does jokes? Heavens. The personable treatment sits well with the poised “Icicle Sleeves” and the bliss-pop joy of “Go Do” on his live album, where the slow start creates an intimate platform from which the latter half takes off with a surge of euphoria. The climactic clamour of “Grow Till Tall” serves as a suitably grand, celebratory send-off. Iceland, 10 points.



**Dan Mangan: Nice, Nice, Very Nice** (Arts & Crafts) £11.99  
Canada’s Dan Mangan joins the crowded indie-folk set with wry wit and an elastic range as his USPs. Good with goofy pop (“Robots”), tour songs (“Road Regrets”), sad-boy ballads (“The Indie Queens Are Waiting”) and self-mockery (“I’m Mr Charm without the charm”), he also finds the freshness to make each tune sing. A thousand US-indie movie soundtracks await him.



Ring 01634 832789 to order any of these CDs



**Julia Stone: In the Memory Machine** (Flock Music) download only  
Don’t let the frail voice dupe you: there’s dark depths in the solo album from half of Australia’s Angus & Julia Stone. “My Baby” swoons beatifically but, as “Winter for the Weekend” thickens the air with violent imagery, her fragile soul-folk shows a dark heart. Like a ballad from *Twin Peaks*, the sickly beauty of the title track typifies this quietly haunting album’s hypnotic swing between delicacy and desolation.

**KEVIN HARLEY**

# San Francisco Chronicle



MUSIC

## Dan Mangan's unusual path to music success

September 12, 2010 | By Aidin Vaziri, Chronicle Pop Music Critic

Dan Mangan didn't know the first thing about how the music industry worked when he started - still doesn't. But that hasn't stopped the 27-year-old Canadian singer-songwriter from recording and releasing two critically successful albums on his own, circling the globe for nearly seven years while picking up bigger audiences and scoring several major industry plaudits.

"I have been accused in the past of having naive optimism at times," Mangan says, calling from his home in Vancouver. "I kind of figured if I was going to make music my career, I didn't want to do it half-assed. I wanted to put everything into it."

His do-it-yourself dedication really paid off after the arrival of last year's sophomore album, "Nice, Nice, Very Nice," which was picked up for distribution by the powerhouse Canadian indie label Arts & Crafts, home of acts like Feist and Broken Social Scene. The imprint secured an American release for the LP along with a tour supporting the Walkmen, which reaches the Fillmore on Tuesday.

It's definitely a step up from the days he would book tours across Europe on his own using Google and a rail pass. "I must have looked so pathetic at the time, hardly be-

ing able to carry all this crap up tunnels and tubes," Mangan says. "It was a really hard thing to do. But am I glad I did it."

He says the experience makes him appreciate everything that's happening for him now that much more. In the past year, the emotional "Nice, Nice, Very Nice" has earned him several national awards, including the XM Radio Verge Artist of the Year and the CBC Bucky Awards for best vocals and best song. It has also drawn nearly universal critical praise.

To fund the making of the album, Mangan says he drafted a business plan and approached family and friends for loans.

"Before making this record there were some dark moments where I was questioning everything," says Mangan, who released his first, 2003's "All at Once," to little fanfare. "I didn't know if it was going to happen."

Given his sleepy, oak-smoked voice, you might think Mangan grew up on a steady diet of Van Morrison and Bob Dylan. That's only part of the story. Yes, his parents were major classic-rock fans who left plenty of choice vinyl around the house for Mangan and his brother to explore. But the first album he actually bought with his own money - the one that made the biggest impression on him as an artist - was Aerosmith's midcareer beast "Get a Grip."

"I'm embarrassed to talk about it, but at the same time I can't discount how stoked I was on that when I was 9 years old," Mangan says. "I can't deny what I'm doing is pop music - it has verses and choruses. That's not an insult as long as it's done well. Having those influences, being able to listen to Dylan as a kid but then also to be able to appreciate 'Get a Grip' - all those things fueled the interest in music and the die-hard love of music."

It wasn't easy arriving at the emotionally complex, wonderfully clever songs that make up "Nice, Nice, Very Nice," such as "Road Regrets" and "The Indie Queens Are Waiting." Mangan, who took the title for the album from a Kurt Vonnegut poem, said it took a long time to find his own voice.

"I started a band in high school, and we were just terrible," he says. "The songs were just weak imitations of stuff I was listening to. But after six years I remember the moment I went onstage and I realized that I wasn't copying anyone anymore. I finally felt like I was being honest."

After all the time and trials it took for him to get here, Mangan is intent on making the most of every moment. It's hard to think of another artist so genuinely appreciative of the small victories.

"It's been an amazing year," he says. "We've had these great treks. So many variables had to come in line to do the things we're doing. It's universal force. It's been magnificent." {sbox}

## Song of the Day: Dan Mangan - Road Regrets

By RYAN BORT | *Published:* AUGUST 9, 2010



Every Monday through Friday, we deliver a different song as part of our Song of the Day podcast subscription. This podcast features exclusive KEXP in-studio performances, unreleased songs, and recordings from independent artists that our DJs think you should hear. Each and every Friday we offer songs by local artists. Today's selection, featured on the Afternoon Show with Kevin Cole, is "Road Regrets" by Dan Mangan from his album *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* on Arts & Crafts.

### Dan Mangan - Road Regrets (MP3)

Dan Mangan, who hails from just across the border in Vancouver, developed his chops playing his

lyrical, acoustic indie folk in whatever bar or venue would take him, touring incessantly after releasing his debut album *Postcards and Daydreams*. His hard work paid off with the release of his sophomore effort *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, which came out in Canada last year and immediately brought Mangan widespread acclaim and attention. Earlier this year he singed with Toronto-based label Arts & Crafts to released the album in America, and it's set to hit shelves August 10th (tomorrow). I think it's safe to say that it's going to be a while before Mangan has any more trouble booking shows for himself.

*Nice, Nice, Very Nice* was titled in reference to a Kurt Vonnegut poem, and it isn't surprising that Mangan decided to throw a nod to the late satirist. His songs are witty, cognizant of the general absurdity of life, and take everything with a grain of salt. And as is evidenced by the quirky, how-did-I-get-here expressions he often wears in photos, as well as his funny video blogs on his excellent website, Mangan himself is down to earth and knows not to take anything too seriously.

In an interview with 24H (also on his website) he describes his latest album as "...mellow at times, but also dramatic at times, and intense and large." Today's Song of the Day "Road Regrets" definitely falls under the dramatic, intense, and large category. It is a heartfelt and intense song that is constantly building with driving drums, bass, and chord strumming as well as Mangan's strong but vulnerable vocals that let you know that he deeply believes and feels every word and emotion he is conveying through his lyrics.

Dan Mangan is currently touring the United States, and will skip over to Europe at the end of September. Unfortunately, according to his MySpace page and website anyway, he will only be making it as far north as Portland, where he will be playing the Crystal Ballroom with Okkervil River and Bobby Bare Jr. on September 10th.

# San Francisco Chronicle



## CD Reviews

### Dan Mangan

David Wiegand

Sunday, August 15, 2010



**Rock**

It's probably a good thing that Vancouver's Dan Mangan (due at the Fillmore on Sept. 14) busted his butt for all those years, accepting every gig he was offered and building a justly loyal fan base. Why? Because if you went by the album cover alone — a silhouette of Queen Elizabeth against a powder-blue background — you'd never know that Mangan is not only a superior songwriter, but also a poetically compelling singer. "Nice, Nice, Very Nice," which takes its title from a Kurt Vonnegut poem, isn't indie rock for the bookish crowd alone, but it's helpful if you appreciate subtle irony, which infuses the 12 songs on this dazzling, heartbreaking album. The standout (and even that is absurd, given the breadth and musicality of the entire album) is "Road Regrets," marked by the plaintive chorus ("Hell, I took you up on all your threats to leave/ It's a shame, it's a crying shame/ And ain't it always the way that takes you back to from where it is you came") and heart-throbbing percussion. On the strength of songs such as "The Indie Queens Are Waiting" ("Are you watching, or just waiting to see that your days are numbered?") and "Basket" ("We are young, we have years ahead, maybe, we might fall in love or fall apart/ Before it ends, well we should try to start"), Mangan establishes himself as a ferociously savvy songwriter with intense musicality. Every time you listen to this album, expect your heart to break more, not always out of sadness, but out of sheer awe at the simple beauty he weaves in his music.

## DAN MANGAN

This gem of a pop album came out in Canada last year, earning the Vancouver-based singer/songwriter praise and awards. Now, as his first American headlining band tour begins, it's getting a release and deserved push in the United States. "Pine For Cedars," a quiet, elegant ballad, stands out for its starkness amid a bevy of witty indie-rock and chamber-folk wonders that recall Mountain Goats' John Darnielle, especially on "You Silly Git" and "Tina's Glorious Comeback." Keep an eye on this guy; he's going places. Download: "Robots." (Appearing Tuesday At Great Scott, Allston.)

## Dan Mangan's Nice, Nice, Very Nice year



By Ben Rayner  
Pop Music Critic  
Pop Music Critic

Published On Sun Apr 18 2010

The past year has brought a lot of good news Dan Mangan's way, but not enough that he's blasé about his good fortune yet.

Last week, for instance, he received confirmation that he'll be playing the John Peel Stage at the U.K.'s Glastonbury Festival in June alongside fellow Canadians Broken Social Scene and Holy F---, a stroke of luck that should put the Vancouver singer/songwriter in front of 10,000 or so potential new fans. It's a considerably better Glastonbury deal than Mangan had expected, and his enthusiasm is easily audible on a trans-Canada phone line.

"I just kind of assumed we'd be lumped into a handful of tiny, side-stage kind of things and be overlooked by the general, main-stage stuff. So to land a spot on one of those stages was a real coup," he says, adding with a laugh: "We'll raise the Canadian flag in the backstage area."

Mangan has, as he puts it, "caught some very fortunate door openings along the way" since his impressively eclectic and imaginatively arranged second album, *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, emerged to glowing reviews last summer.

He picked up XM Satellite Radio's \$25,000 Verge Award a matter of weeks later, while some totally unexpected commercial-radio exposure for the infectious ditty "Robots" — that's the one with the charming "Robots need love, too" singalong chorus — saw him playing in front of larger and larger crowds across the country as the year drew to a close. More recently, he signed a management deal with Toronto's Social Scene-affiliated Arts & Crafts crew, a development that's already smoothing his introduction to international audiences. U.S. and European re-releases of *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* are in the works via A&C, too.

"They're so incredible. I noticed it down in Austin at the South by Southwest festival — I was able to scoop up a couple of extra showcases just from being aligned with them and people saying: 'Oh, an Arts & Crafts artist? Sure!' " says Mangan, 26. "They're really smart and they're sweet dudes and dudettes, as well. To be honest, I didn't really know them that well and my relationship with them came kind of beautifully and organically. I just couldn't be more thrilled to be working with them. . . . I wouldn't be surprised if we saw a Canadian release of the next album by Arts & Crafts."

Let's not misrepresent Mangan — who brings a five-piece band to the Horseshoe Tavern on Thursday — as some kind of Johnny Come Lately with a horseshoe wedged up his backside, though: He's put a lot of work in to get to this point.

Even before *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* caught the ears of the broader Canadian populace, Mangan had doggedly taken the formative tunes from his 2005 debut, *Postcards and Daydreaming*, on the road to far-flung ports of call across Canada and the States and “cafes in all these tiny, little towns throughout Europe and Australia.”

“I have this brilliant ability to go on these tours that are really enviable to my peers but where I come back having lost thousands of dollars,” he says. “So it was ambitious, that’s what it was, but it wasn’t exactly smart touring. I wasn’t grabbing onto great tours or anything like that. I was just doing what I could with what I had.”

Likewise, Mangan hit the touring trail in support of the new album so hard between last September and February that he wound up stricken by two separate, severe flus that, as he puts it, “just beat the crap out of me.” He is, thus, trying to plot his workload a bit more strategically now and take time to properly recuperate between tours — although, he concedes, “outside of Canada, it’s still a total battle and you’re always fighting from the ground up.”

Not that Mangan’s home time looks to be any more relaxing. He’s already mulling album No. 3. Maybe even fretting over it just a bit.

“I’ve got a producer in mind and I’ve relocated in Vancouver to a larger suite that’s big enough that I can put in a studio, so the immediate plan is to invest in some recording equipment,” he says. “I would still do all the really important stuff in a studio but I can bring those files home and the idea would be that I could do a lot of overdubbing and experimenting and messing around here.

“That’s the thing that drives me nuts about studios: If I want to spend seven hours messing around with, like, the sound of a clap or something, then I’m costing money and wasting everybody’s time because everyone else’s agenda is slightly different than mine. So I like the idea that I can do that at home and the only person’s time that I’m wasting is my own. That’s kind of a nice, luxurious idea.

“I realize now, too, that there’s a different pressure next time around, and I want to be really careful about it. I want to make sure it’s something that’s really great and I want to take my time with it.”



## Songwriter On The Cusp Of Stardom

February 18, 2010

VANCOUVER - Dan Mangan's dad is worried about him. The Vancouver singer-songwriter has been going full tilt for months; he figures he'd slept in his own bed maybe eight or nine times between September and the morning last week that we met for coffee. His father, a real estate lawyer, fears his son is going to burn out.

"Last night my dad was just ragging on me," Mangan says in between sips of an Americano. "He was like: 'You need to slow down.'"

Mangan, who is touring like a madman on the strength of the rave reviews for his album *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, knows his father has a point, but he can't help himself. "Fortunately and unfortunately, I was graced with a totally relentless and tireless work ethic when it comes to music and career, and a kind of blind, naïve optimistic sense of ambition," he says. "But at the same time I do feel like if I keep up at the pace I've been doing, I'm just not going to last."

Mangan - born in Smithers, B.C. and raised in Toronto and Vancouver - was booking his own shows a year ago, and as recently as September was working as a waiter at The Keg on Granville Island to make ends meet. Now it's safe to say he's become something of an indie superstar, so much so that, after he leaves the coffee shop, the barista gushes about the celebrity in her midst. And the pace is pretty staggering. He toured Australia last month, then Alberta and B.C., made a stop in Los Angeles to play at a Canadian showcase coinciding with the Grammy Awards (and where he was thrilled to meet Leonard Cohen). Tuesday night he's the big draw at the Cultural Olympiad's New Songs, New Voices showcase. Then there's a show at Surrey's 2010 Celebration Site, private concert at the athletes' village in Whistler, and the Frostbite Music Festival in Whitehorse on the weekend.

Since its release last August, *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* has earned him attention and accolades, including CBC Radio 3 Bucky Awards for Song of the Year and Best Vocals - both for *Robots*. He was also named best new artist by iTunes Canada in the singer/songwriter category for 2009, and artist of the year at XM's Verge Music Awards. And at Christmas, he signed a management deal with the prestigious Arts & Crafts label. "He has this very rare kind of duality as an artist where he's both artistically creative and talented and incredibly self-motivated," says Arts & Crafts' Kieran Roy.

The rest of 2010 looks promising too. Mangan will perform in Toronto during Canadian Music Week and at South by Southwest. The album should be released this summer in the U.S. and Europe. But the sudden fame hasn't changed his life much. Yes he's leaving his cramped apartment over a grocery store on Vancouver's east side for a two-bedroom place a block from the beach on the west side - but the new apartment is the basement suite in his sister's house, renovated by his mother (a former United Church minister) and her wife. Indie popularity doesn't necessarily translate into a big paycheque.

"I'm totally poor and scraping by," he says. "The bank statements aren't pretty right now." But he has paid back the \$8,500 he borrowed from family and friends to make *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*. He went \$35,000 in debt to make the record, running up his credit card and extending his lines of credit. It was a decision he made in desperation after a long tour supporting his first album, *Postcards and Daydreaming*, and a feeling that he was spinning his wheels trying to get the second album made.

"I kind of felt very alone in the effort," he says. "I'd applied for a bunch of funding; I kept getting turned down. I was stagnant and I was feeling: 'What can I do to change this moping cycle that I was in?' I was just so bummed and unsure."

On the advice of family and friends, he put together a business plan, borrowed the money and spent six weeks in Toronto making *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*. The breakthrough hit has certainly been *Robots*, a catchy tune about robots needing love too. But songs like *Basket* ("We are old / And our son took the dog away / And fair enough / guess we're tired all the time. / All the time") suggest a maturity - and an obsession with aging - beyond Mangan's 26 years.

According to family lore, the first hint of this came at the age of 18 months, when, an early talker, he blurted out: "Before I was a baby, I was an old man with a red house and a dog." It made his father wonder about reincarnation. Maybe it was just the beginning of a long career coming up with memorable lines.

Mangan is now writing material for his next record, which he figures will come out mid-2011. He is hoping to emulate artists like Radiohead and Beck, who he says make every album a bit of a surprise. "I really don't want to make the same record twice," he says, promising something "noisier and weirder." "I think part of wanting to change and do something different is a little bit of a security thing too," he adds. "Because what if I do something similar but not as good? That's gonna suck."

# THE VANCOUVER SUN

---



## Hitting the big time: Dan Mangan's on top of the world

January 7, 2010

What could Dan Mangan possibly do to top the roller-coaster year he's just had?

Not only did the rootsy indie singer-songwriter appear on a mind-boggling number of year-end "best of" lists with his sophomore effort, *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*, he was also named Artist of the Year at the Verge Music Awards (with a \$25,000 prize), appeared on the cover of four Canadian weeklies, received two CBC

Radio 3 Bucky Awards (Song of the Year and Best Vocals for "Robots"), and got the nod as Best New Artist in the singer-songwriter category on iTunes.

To top it off, he recently returned from a Canadian and European tour, where he played 52 shows in nine different countries during a wild, 70-day ride.

So, really, if he could finally leave his job as a server at a local eatery for good, that would be a nice way to kick off 2010, no?

"It's kinda started to get a little weird," he said in a recent interview, sitting on a patio across the street from the Vancouver Art Gallery. "Someone's like, 'Oh, I saw your concert the other day. That was really great.' And I'm like, 'Oh, thanks a lot! Did you want that Keg-sized? Can I get you some ketchup?'"

He laughs.

To be fair, Mangan does admit he doesn't mind his "real job" at all, and that it's a bit of a mixed blessing that his insane schedule has kept him away from the restaurant for the last four months.

But it's unlikely the rising star will fade back into a grind of the pepper kind any time soon.

The odds are 2010 will find Mangan reaching for even higher ground, and if the next couple of months' worth of scheduling and some early Polaris Music Prize buzz are any indication, this could be the year Mangan hits the big time.

As you read this, Mangan has just begun a four-week tour of Australia, which will then turn into a mini-tour of B.C. and Alberta, before coming back to play three gigs in his hometown of Vancouver during the Winter Olympics.

Wedged in the middle of all this, Mangan will be joining Newfoundland's Hey Rosetta! and Somalian-Canadian rapper K'naan at a private music showcase being held at the Canadian consulate-general's residence in L.A. during the Grammy Awards celebration weekend.

Oh, and did we mention Nice, Nice, Very Nice will also be getting proper American, European and Australian releases along the way?

Someone less level-headed than Mangan would probably be getting some big ideas at this point, but the 26-year-old likes to keep it all in perspective.

"Getting all that press and getting a whole bunch of cover stories, that was a real first," he says. "Then there's this part of you that feels, 'Oh, OK, that's where I'm at and that's what I'm entitled to now,' and the other 99 per cent of you slaps you in the face and says, 'What are you talking about? You have to earn it every time.'

"The second you feel entitled to that fruit tray at the venue, and that it's not really cool any more, that's when you become a jackass."

Sure, Mangan admits it's been pretty amazing to get more recognition and to be able to hang out with celebrities such as Elijah Wood or Colin and Jonny Greenwood from Radiohead ( "There's some grace at the top," Mangan says), but he explains his goal has never been to become famous, much less "seek fame."

"Being famous for fame's sake sucks," he says as someone walks by and waves at him with an emphatic, "Hey Dan!"

Mangan waves back and lets out an awkward laugh.

"Ah, geez," he says. "That was embarrassing."

If anything, Mangan's approach is somewhat idealistic: he would rather have his songs truly connect, and for his fans to really be fans of his music rather than just his name.

And this is yet another reason why Mangan deserves every single bit of the success coming his way.

## ALBUM REVIEWS

# Dan Mangan – Nice, Nice, Very Nice



### CHARTattack

July 24, 2009

By Sheena Lyonnais

4.5 Stars

Dan Mangan sees the world differently. As if this wasn't evident enough on 2007's *Postcards And Daydreaming* and this year's teaser *Roboteering* EP, he shines a new light on his melancholic observations from traveling and growing up in Vancouver with 12 new tracks of genuine beauty. *Nice, Nice Very Nice* captures the best of Mangan's indie folk, from his satirical wit in the poppy "Sold" to the unconventional source of inspiration (bus shelters) in "Tina's Glorious Comeback." Pretty guitars, pianos and violins are complimented by an army of indie guests including Justin Rutledge, Veda Hille, Mark Berube and members of Elliott Brood, Said The Whale, Mother Mother, Major Maker and Small Sins. The beauty of this is Mangan doesn't need the indie cred for this record to shine. While the guests are subtle enhancers, Mangan's talent speaks for itself. His writing is alluring and pure, and includes well-thought out lines packaged with soothing vocals. The sound is seamless thanks to producer John Critchley (Elliott Brood, Holy Fuck, Hidden Cameras) and the songs are tight. He's an observer in the sense you'd want to join him on a patio for a drink just to see the city through his eyes for an afternoon. Until then, *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* effectively lets you pretend for just over 40 mesmerizing minutes.."

### NOW Toronto

Week of August 27, 2009, Vol. 28, No. 52

By Paul Terefenko

4 Stars

Dan Mangan's new full-length is unquestionably honest. Hell, he even sings about not stealing. The album doesn't reach for lofty philosophical revelations, but instead focuses on the simple realities of Mangan's surroundings, joys and woes. The gruff-voiced singer/songwriter employs over 20 musicians on guitar, horns, strings, bells, pianos and foot stomps, but they never overwhelm his tales of travel weariness, robotic queuing, people-watching in breakfast diners and bus shelters. His reflections are personal (the liner notes include vital contextual doors to each track) but also speak to a universal daily grind. While most of us keep moving along, Mangan distills these banalities into earnest indie folk and invites us into his chorus.

**Top track:** The Indie Queens Are Waiting

**METRO Toronto****August 13, 2009****By Bryan Borzykowski****3.5 Stars**

Vancouver's Dan Mangan has quietly been building a name for himself since releasing his debut in 2007, but expect the chatter to increase in volume with this new release. If you like The Weakerthans or early Hawksley Workman, you'll love this record. It's all well crafted singersongwriter stuff with impressive range. Mangan is able to move from the incredibly infectious sing-a-long Robots to the sensitive John K. Samson-ish The Indie Queens are Waiting with ease. If anything, he sounds a little too much like some of his influences but with such strong material, no one will care.

**OTTAWA XPRESS****August 20, 2009****By Steve Guimond****3.5 Stars**

Van City musician Dan Mangan satisfies fans of well-written, well-thought-out music with his second record Nice, Nice, Very Nice. The young singer/songwriter leaves his more folksy beginnings in the closet on this one, concentrating on the larger fishbowl of pop music, although the twang and roots don't hide away in fear. Oozing earnestness like it's nobody's business - how very Canadian - Mangan's disc is filled with an impressive array of guests/friends: Veda Hille, Justin Rutledge and Mark Berube, as well as members of Elliott Brood and Mother Mother. All in all, a nice, eclectic bag of tricks.

**SEE Magazine****October 29, 2009****By Kortney Jmaeff****5 Stars**

Stealing his title from a poem in the classic Kurt Vonnegut novel Cat's Cradle, Dan Mangan has crafted a near-perfect indie rock album. Simple yet varied, each of these 12 songs could easily stand alone as a sparkling single. The most surprising aspect about Nice, Nice is that it's as solid lyrically as it is musically. A great example is the anthemic opener "Road Regrets," which slowly lures you into its grasp, building tension until Mangan's raspy voice unleashes "Watch out for the paraphrase/For they will crown you and then they will take your legs!" Even when Mangan gets melancholy, he's never sappy — wonderful proof that serious music doesn't have to take itself too seriously. If you think that I'm overenthusiastic about this album, try listening to the chorus of "Robots" without singing along: "Robots need love too!" Go on, I dare you! That's a double dare to any Death Cab fans! (Dan Mangan plays The Haven Social Club on October 30.)

**SOUNDPROOF Magazine****By V. Rachel Weldon****4.5 Stars**

**SOUNDS LIKE:** Nice songwriting, nice arrangements, a very nice album.

**WHY/WHY NOT:** Vancouver's Dan Mangan makes it easy to review his latest release. Indeed, it is nice, very nice. Mangan is a little bit country, a little bit rock 'n' roll and completely impressive for stitching the two styles together so seamlessly. His voice sounds like that of an older, gruffer country musician, but his youthful and lively songwriting pulls at the shirtsleeves of his inner Woody Guthrie. With lyrics like "Robots need love too", listeners wouldn't expect the cheeky content to sail through waves of dynamic choral balladeering and colourful instrumentation, but Mangan doesn't only pull it off, he makes it soar. This is one lovely effort, and certainly worth a listen.

## **TV GUIDE.CA**

**September 2, 2009**

**By Jessica Russell**

Vancouver indie folk singer-songwriter Dan Mangan fully lives up to this sophomore album's name as it instantly wins you over as this summer's perfect road-trip soundtrack. His supercatchy singalong numbers offer quirky perspectives on the world with piano toe-tappers and rootsy guitars strums. His silly but endearing single "Robots," which professes that robots need love too, could very well be my favourite song of the year. But he balances this earnestness with a few melancholy tales, like in "You Silly Girl," and brings down the scenesters in "The Indie Queens Are Waiting." After one listen, you'll find yourself returning to this album over and over again until it becomes a staple in your collection.

**Recommended if you dig ...** Joel Plaskett or Hey Rosetta!

## **THE COAST**

**August 13, 2009**

**By Hilary Beaumont**

Vancouver native Dan Mangan's vocals on this LP will charm the pants off any summer roadtripper, via beautifully sung folk pop melodies, sometimes about coffee, sometimes about love. Mangan's smart, soul-bearing album kicks off with "Road Regrets," a song he wrote in 2007 while driving from El Paso to Austin, drinking gas-station coffee and regretting it all the way. Second track "Robots" is a sincerely sung silly tune that proves "robots need love too." Mangan wrote the Nice, Nice, Very Nice tunes between 2005 and 2008, and it shows; this is a thoughtful release that will grow on you, listen after listen, all summer long.

## **THE PROVINCE**

**August 11, 2009**

**By Stuart Derdeyn**

**GRADE A**

After the incredibly strong Roboteering EP, some asked if this gravel-piped storyteller could better gems such as "Robots" or "The Indie Queens are Waiting." Yes, and then some. Those songs and the upbeat "Sold" from the EP all grace this dozen gemmed disc. So do future fan faves such as the musing ballad "Pine For Cedars" or the gorgeously rendered shuffle "You Silly Git." From his unusual and razor-sharp phrasing to the sage poetry in his everyday-life observations, he's in the ranks of geniuses such as Greg Brown, Nick Drake or Badly Drawn Boy.