



## Erica Buettner – The Slaughtered Lamb 8th April

by [Simon Holland](#) on 13 April, 2013

in [Album of the Month](#), [Live Reviews](#), [Music Reviews](#)

I'm just a little late getting downstairs at the Slaughtered Lamb and as a result have missed the opening act of the three billed for tonight. Fortunately, however, I do get to see **The Diamond Family Archive**, who proved to be a minor revelation.

Singer and guitarist Laurence Collyer, sports a seriously impressive beard, the sort that gets you noticed, but also the sort you can mumble into. Somewhere betwixt the two lies his vocal technique. His guitar playing too hovers between agitated flurries and elegiac beauty, while the drums skitter and patter and the bass holds the steady line that gives these songs their ballast. There are little lo-fi embellishments, drones and effects and the whole thing becomes increasingly compelling to watch as the set weaves a precarious path between folk's roots and heady improvisation, as phrases and riffs circle and repeat.

My notes refer to Ravens, black dogs, hanging, lies, betrayal, death and general blackness, yet despite the overwhelming sense of melancholy, this is really enjoyable and a version of Cyril Tawney's *Sally Free And Easy* in the midst of it all is a really pleasant surprise. I've bookmarked their webpage and have been quietly checking out the songs on line since. Surely we'll be back to them later.

But the main reason I'm here is something I've been eagerly anticipating since the start of the year, as Erica Buettner is the headline act. I've already reviewed the CD for one of our Album Of The Month slots ([read it here](#)) and if you've read that you'll know that I'm a big fan. As good fortune continues to work in my favour Erica doesn't disappoint and this is turned into a memorable night.

From the opener *Time Travelling* she has the audience rapt in silent, close attention. Erica's clever word play weaves its spell and I think for a few moments we are all of us transported. Her guitar playing is delicate, yet adds harmony and substance to the songs. What is most important, however, is that an air of intimacy is immediately created. There's a simple "Hi" and we're into *Our Most Fragile Things*.

If there's a sense from the lack of stage patter that Erica is perhaps a little nervous, then it surly doesn't tell in her singing and playing and the next song turns her confession of being shy into a winning hand. Erica explains that she thought she could write her stage banter in the same way that she does her songs. The result is *Dellusion, Disillusion*, which she explains are, "Two sides of the same coin." It's not from the album and the intricate wordplay is spiked with real humour as she sings, "I'm afraid to lose my mind unless in the Buddhist sense," before making a reference to a time in Amsterdam, that apparently didn't go so well.

The song seems to renew her courage and although you wouldn't ever say she was effusive, she seems over the shyness. Despite claiming to be, "Not very good at it," Erica even tells the story of *Under The Radar* while tuning, explaining that it came to her almost fully formed telling us, "I woke up one morning with this song in my head, so it was mostly written in the shower." It comes as no real surprise to learn that this is the exception as most of her songs take their time to come together.

Cellist Conrad Steel joins Erica for a run through *True Love And Water*, *The Body Electric* and *No Man's Land*, three more sublime tracks from the CD. She definitely seems to warm to the task of talking about making the record, and so she should as it's clearly been a labour of love. She even shares a little aside with Conrad, reminding him of all the cups of tea, with very little to eat in between. When Erica gets going she has, as you might expect a natural gift for a story, alighting on the small details that bring out the magic.

It's naturally a pleasure to have the songs from *True Love And Water*, stripped back as they have been, with the Slaughtered Lamb's downstairs providing an ambience somewhere between a ramshackle crash pad and knowingly hip, scenester café bar.

The biggest pleasure, however probably comes from the unfamiliar songs, as they prove that there's plenty more to come from Erica and the set finishes with *Rome* and *Trains Depart* (I think!?). The first is as Erica explains, loosely based on her experience of booking her own gigs, something else that she disarmingly claims, "It turns out I'm not very good at it." That last song includes the lines "I tie a knot for tracing back to you slipped round my finger as I fade from view." As I leave I know I'm not alone in hoping that that thread will bring her back to London very soon.

Review by: [Simon Holland](#)

*Photo Credit: Fabio Teixeira*

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