



Youthful, Confrontational Fire: John Lennon McCullagh's North South Divide

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359 Music

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Hamstrung at first glance by 66% of his name, Doncaster's John Lennon McCullagh wastes no time establishing his own musical identity.

The fifteen-year-old's debut album *North South Divide* is a ferocious blast of barebones modern blues that heralds the arrival of what could be one of the most significant voices in modern British music to come along in years. With all the guts of a young Dylan, McCullagh comes, as he puts it in "55 Blues" with "a voice busting out of my head." And indeed, it does. On the twelve largely acoustic numbers here, the young singer spits his lyrics with ragged resolve and blares his harmonica like a rallying cry, and every moment is a revelation. His arrival is as seminal as Dylan, Ochs and Billy Bragg and like the first arrival of those musical forebears, his work belies his young age.

"Long Long Way" burns with wistful muscle; "Rivers Of Blood" is achingly poignant and politically alive and the bluesy howl of "Short Sharp Shock" is a jolt of youthful, confrontational fire. Meanwhile, the album closing "The Strand" is an eight minute epic whose cinematic narrative is both thoughtful and vivid, bringing to mind the early work of everyone from Bragg to The Alarm.

"Who can tell me wrong from right/And tell me who I am?" McCullagh asks on "Short Sharp Shock."

That's not a question that needs answering. He knows exactly who he is.

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