

# Big Kitty: An album review

**Words by Bella Spencer**

**Art courtesy of Big Kitty and William Joseph Johnson**

Excelsior Breeze Catcher is the third album by released by Tennessee/Alabama native Big Kitty, and his first album as a father. As we chatted over email he told me how being a father has completely changed everything about his life and the huge effect it has had on his creative pursuits. Far from the image that I conjured of Big Kitty attempting to scribble down lyrics with his left hand while changing a nappy with his right, he explained that his daughter's 'very beautiful and funny mind that is so strange and dada-esque' influenced his song writing. And what is wonderful about this record is that you can feel that. From the bright and charismatic album sleeve based on a basic sketch from using his daughter's magic markers, to the vibrant and joyous stories woven through each track; the record is accompanied with a real sense of youth and will have you dancing along with a spring in your two-step.



The original band members reunited to record this album, after moving apart for the demands of family life. They spent a week, along with some guest musicians, in the iconic Bomb Shelter studio in Nashville with the ambition of going completely analogue. While financial shortages meant that digital technology had to play a small part in the production, the record

has still achieved a clean and authentically crafted feel. Big Kitty's distinctive voice carries the record as the tracks transition in style and introduce an eclectic mix of instruments.

It's easy to detect that Big Kitty began his career playing country and blue grass in Chattanooga. He also credits much of his style to his treasured moments listening to English rock bands on cassette while driving to and from gigs, away from the judging ears of the traditionalists. Unsurprisingly, he was particularly inspired by the Beatles and Bowie; connoisseurs of energetic and quirky music. For this album, Big Kitty told the trumpet and euphonium players to "make it British as you can get". The album definitely retains an American feel but details such as the album's opening and closing church bells and the hazy harmonies on the track 'Dr Harmony' bring a hint of the quintessential British.



The entire album is a joyous affair but the star of the album for me is the 7<sup>th</sup> track: 'Brian'. Written about Big Kitty's 'estranged/ distant/ lost/ deceased friends', it conjures an image of all the stray people you used to know, dancing like loons, enjoying the good old times.

[Listen here-> https://bigkitty.bandcamp.com/album/excelsior-breeze-catchers](https://bigkitty.bandcamp.com/album/excelsior-breeze-catchers)