

The release of James Holden's long-anticipated second album *The Inheritors* in the summer of 2013 kicked off a bold new phase in the enduring British electronic guru's musical career. An epic 75 minute long English pagan saga, the immersive and idiosyncratic alternative electronic universe of *The Inheritors* was the product of Holden's late night studio jams on his modular synthesizer and custom hybrid analogue-digital machines. But with a recording process that had become so focused around the capturing of these in-the-moment live performances, it was not long before the act of travelling the world playing other people's records as part of Holden's international DJ career of some years standing began to feel increasingly out of step with his most recent studio explorations: the time had come to take the plunge with a live show all of his very own.

It was Caribou's Dan Snaith who had first given Holden the idea to transport his hitherto studio-bound modular synthesizer rig into the live arena, interrupting Holden's album preparations with a welcome invitation to join Four Tet, Sinkane and a bonus brass section (and for one special show, the legendary Sun Ra Arkestra leader Marshall Allen) in the 2011 line-up of the Caribou Vibration Ensemble supergroup, as heard on the recent *CVE Live 2011* LP. But it would take an impossible-to-turn-down post-album invitation from none other than Thom Yorke to convince Holden to finally assemble his own live touring outfit, with a request to support Yorke's own Atoms For Peace supergroup on their North American arena tour in the autumn of 2013. Holden had long been a fan of the London-born brotherly synth-and-drum improv duo Rocketnumbernine, so their jazz-trained drummer Tom Page was the natural first choice to complement Holden and his newly-condensed portable modular set-up on this fledgling live outing across the pond, placing electronics and drums head to head in an improvised reimagining of tracks from *The Inheritors*.

Following their return to the UK, the newly-formed synth-and-drum duo of Holden and Page have continued their live adventures with festivals and shows across Europe, occasionally joined onstage (schedules permitting) by the improvisational flourishes of French saxophonist Etienne Jaumet (of *Zombie Zombie* fame), donor of the guest sax solo on *Inheritors* highlight *The Caterpillar's Intervention*. And thanks to Oxford maths graduate Holden's self-coded interactive drummer-following software – which is informed by the latest mathematical models of musicians' timing – the nuanced drumming of Tom Page is liberated from the tyranny of the click track which usually dominates any attempt to integrate real drums with live electronic performance: instead, Holden's arpeggios are hung off Page's drum hits, enabling this electronically-minded duo to play with the interconnected togetherness of a “proper” live band.

This may all seem a long way from 1999's exuberant teenage trance hit *Horizons*, the 12” single which first thrust the classically-trained 19 year old James Holden onto the global dance music scene thanks to an early intervention from Sony Music, opening up an intensive course of remixing, producing, collaborations and DJing in place of the conventional graduate career path. But when viewed chronologically, a clear progression can be traced from the youthful abandon of the naïve harmonics of his debut release through to the no-less-melodious mathematically-determined technological experiments of the modern day. It was with the formation of his own Border Community record label in 2003 that Holden really began to assert his singular vision, unleashing a bonafide dancefloor classic with his own unstoppable remix of Nathan Fake's *The Sky Was Pink* (2004) before flexing his album muscles with his milestone debut *The Idiots Are Winning* in 2006. (“Holden is operating in a different league”, proclaimed Q Magazine, presciently.) But it would take a further seven years of wandering in the between-albums desert – squeezed between an intensive schedule of weekly DJ excursions – before the grand statement comeback of *The Inheritors* was finally ready to let loose upon the world, kick-starting Holden's radical transformation into the fully-fledged live performer we see today.

And now, as *The Inheritors* touring cycle nears its natural conclusion, Holden's new-found live ambitions show no sign of waning. An invitation to Marrakech's Fella Hotel in early 2014 provided a

unique opportunity to play together with the late Maalem Mahmoud Guinia, legend of Morocco's Gnawa musical tradition. The results of that week-long residency – a trio of live improvisations around Gnawa standards, combining Holden's modular innovations with the Guinia band's plucked guembri, vocal call and response and relentless krakeb percussion – emerged in early 2015 as part of the *Marhaba* EP, a collaborative release between Holden's Border Community and Floating Points' Ego labels. And it was another invitation – this time to perform at London's Barbican and Amsterdam's Muziekgebouw venues as part of their *Hello Terry Riley* joint event in celebration of American minimalist composer Terry Riley's 80th birthday – which provided the catalyst for Holden's next release *Outdoor Museum of Fractals*. Indulging himself in the endlessly unfolding complexity of luxurious washes of Terry-esque arpeggiations, Holden's modular synth was coupled to the tabla playing of Camilo Tirado to create one 45 minute long hypnotic, meditative whole, which is paired with Border Community stalwart Luke Abbott's own Riley-inspired extended gong-drone piece *555Hz* on a split double LP slated for release in January 2016.

Although the DJ sideline which had previously dominated Holden's career (and inevitably eaten into his available studio time) is currently on hiatus, Holden does still occasionally enjoy playing records at people in the form of mixtapes and guest radio appearances. But as he kits out his spacious new studio building in London in preparation for the recording sessions for his next album opus, the goal of capturing an authentic live performance moment is placed right at the heart of his production practice: drummer Tom Page's own RocketNumberNine band were the first to christen the new facility, laying down their Holden-produced 'Two Ways' 12" for Border Community in early 2015. The time has now come for Holden to re-immense himself in the fantasy world of his own carefully-curated collection of synth modules, and this one-time lonesome bedroom producer looks intent on keeping live collaborative performance at the centre of his music-making for the foreseeable future.

praise for 'the inheritors'

"The year's most revealing and intriguing album" **4.5/5 'Album of the Year' Resident Advisor**

"Stunning" **4/5 'Electronica Album of the Year' Mojo**

"A fiercely original feast of experimental sound" **8/10 Uncut**

"An extraordinary, unique record from one of electronic music's most vivid minds" **8/10 Mixmag**

"A brain-melting work of staggering genius" **SPIN**

"*The Inheritors* builds on his remarkable debut – it's even more ambitious in scope, grabbing the listener by the throat and refusing to let go." **9/10 The 405**

"It offers a depth and genuine thrill that, in the context of 2013's electronic music, with its order, precision and cleanliness is a godsend" **9/10 Loud & Quiet**

"A challenge to producers content to be bound by others' expectations" **8/10 XLR8R**

"So unlike anything else out there he is effectively a sub-genre of one" **Q**

"An electronic folk chimera of primordial pagan beats, ancient and timeless yet psychedelically futurist" **8/10 Clash**

Dazed & Confused 'Album of the Month' / Data Transmission 'Album of the Month'

Dummy 9/10 / The Sun 4.5/5 / Crack Magazine 17/20 / Pitchfork 8.2 / Financial Times 4/5

The Times 4/5 / Time Out 4/5 / The Skinny 4/5 / Music OMH 4/5 / Drowned in Sound 8/10

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