



# Old Jerusalem

## The melancholy of anatomy

Those who recognize in “Old Jerusalem” the title of a Will Oldham song will immediately envision a genealogy of melancholy Americans (that which includes Bill Callahan, Damien Jurado, The Mountain Goats, among others). Francisco Silva, the person behind this band of variable geography named Old Jerusalem, never hid his influences and affinities. But, by the third album, those comparisons are no longer necessary. In fact, the new Old Jerusalem record is more interesting when taken in relation to its predecessors, *April* (2003) and *Twice the humbling sun* (2005) than to its masters and models.

Essentially, nothing has changed: these are mainly narrative songs sung in a tender and sometimes desolate moan, sorrowful melodic lines accompanying long pieces of text, kind of a shy confessional tone. These eleven songs are something close to a diagnosis of the stages of a romantic relationship. Those who identify confessional melancholy with adolescent inclinations find here a complete reassessment of that view: a relationship is not a stale object and Francisco Silva follows thoroughly the different subtleties of longing, complicity, estrangement, acceptance and even some cruelty (deliberate or otherwise) that lovers live. Monotony and routine (inevitable elements of any lasting experience) are represented here in a disconcerting (because less obviously “poetic”) way, but that’s also what makes us understand the effects of time passing, its advances and retreats, the

unsure certainty that comes with actually knowing what we want. That, and the touching focus on small gestures and symbols (like a scarf, in “Her scarf”), the ever-present concrete metaphor of our emotions.

Francisco Silva’s style has no resemblance to the minimalist tension or the free association commonly found on so many writers of so-called intimate songs. The words rarely seek the emblematic aphorism, but they stay clear of a prosaic tendency as well, even when describing day-to-day situations. Words, states Francisco Silva in one of the songs, are physical things. And in this record that statement is validated by the discreet rhythmic changes and the melodious ways that some verses find to come to a closure. Besides, *The Temple Bell* benefits from its strings and keyboard parts that add intensity and texture to the material. But maybe the most evident new aspect of this album is the humour and irony found in some of the songs (the snobbish parody in “Arts centre” or the delicious candour of “Love & cows”). Like Francisco Silva explains, there’s no “gloom” where there is movement, and there is more movement on this record than in the ones before it, even when what is analysed is immobility itself. This is not a game, more a confession, but the songs mix with great intelligence disenchantment and distance. “Love & cows”, right at the beginning, shows how “concepts” hide much plainer and painful realities: “We fabricate the concepts but fundamentally fail to connect / We find

awkward our true feelings and give them shapes more ‘politically correct’ / Like when you are bored of me and you won’t take another night / Becomes “we are not communicating, something isn’t right” / Well, it is, that is just the way things are / The end of love sometimes finds us sobbing in the car”. And from there the story follows a plot of light-hearted self-deprecation: he can’t cook, he’s useless managing a budget, he’s not a tidy person, he’s myopic, someone says he’s growing a tummy and on top of it all he’s broken a porcelain cow, utmost symbol of domestic banality. And it all ends not in the anatomy of melancholy but in the melancholy of anatomy, graphic and tender in the same breath: “And our minds and bodies just sensually click / I fall between your boobs and you on my dick”. The Romans used to say that after sexual intercourse every animal gets sad. But that’s just half true. And Francisco Silva, as this record confirms, won’t settle for mere half-truths.

[www.oldjerusalem.net](http://www.oldjerusalem.net)  
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## Discography

*The Temple Bell* / Bor Land 2007  
*Splitted* / Bor Land 2006  
*Twice The Humbling Sun* / Bor Land 2005  
*April* / Bor Land 2003  
*Old & Alla* / Self Released 2001

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