

## Jack White III: Not Just a Pretty Face *Rolling Stone Magazine*

He walks on stage with his face painted like a zombie; dark eyes, frazzled hair, a stoic, unassuming expression, and then he starts to play. The audience sits quietly – mesmerized - until he builds to the refrain when everyone in the room starts to sing along. The music builds to a frenzy as he belts out his stinging guitar riffs performed against intense vocals. Jack drives the crowd to a fever pitch, and then breaking into one of his ballads, brings the audience back down to earth.

When musical virtuoso Jack White picked up the drums at six years old, he could only dream of having such a huge impact on the music scene. Since then White, a classically trained 37-year old Detroit native has learned to play a multitude of instruments including guitar, bass, and piano among others. His latest venture, a solo project entitled *Blunderbuss*, is a complex mix of styles and genres worthy of acclaim. With searing guitar leads, complicated rhythms, and screaming vocals, this album will be hard to top.

White broke on the music scene in 1997 at the age of 22, when former wife Meg joined Jack and his guitar in the attic of their home. What transpired was what Richard Harrington of *The Washington Post* described as “a dirt simple sound—Jack thrashing away on his guitar and singing with unbridled passion, pony-tailed Meg bashing away at her drum kit with workmanlike focus. A surprisingly full sound, loud and raucous-- like the Carpenters on steroids.” Their debut album released in 1999 entitled *The White Stripes*, displayed a “raw-boned, rootsy garage energy stripped of artifice and excess.”<sup>i</sup> Subsequently he has produced five other albums with his former wife - *De Stijl*, *White Blood Cells*, *Elephant*, *Get Behind Me*, and *Icky Thump* - all of which received critical acclaim. In 2009 Jack appeared in a feature about the electric guitar titled

*It Might Get Loud* with Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page and U2's The Edge, where he wrote his first solo single, "Fly Farm Blues." He now tours with two groups, The Peacocks and The Buzzards (sometimes called *Los Buzzardos*).

*Blunderbuss*, released on April 24, 2012, is the multi-talented White's first solo album and is a courageous blend of musical combinations. It's a chance for Jack to step outside the box, and he uses this opportunity to stretch his talents and produce a mix of styles and instrumentation into a powerful collection of musical ingenuity. His surprising additions of vocal inflection add an exciting complement to this collection. White goes beyond expectations with brash and angry lyrics that are both provocative and startling.

It's evident that he has experienced some romantic disappointments after his breakup with former wife Meg in 2011. The first single released from the album is the acoustic ballad "Love Interruption" one of his darker selections that states, "I want love to roll me over slowly, stick a knife inside me and twist it all around...I want love to change my friends to enemies, and show how it's all my fault, I won't let love disrupt, corrupt, or interrupt me anymore." The fast-paced, hard-driving rock piece "Freedom at 21," has a foundation of syncopated drums, overlaid by wild vocals and an even wilder guitar solo that proclaims, "she don't care what kind of wounds she's inflicting on me, she don't care what color bruises that she's leaving on me, she's got freedom in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

The collection opens with "Missing Pieces" a nice, hard grooving blues/rock number featuring another of Jack's screaming guitar solos that lets us know that "sometimes someone controls everything about you, and when they tell you that they just can't live without you, they ain't lying. They'll take pieces of you, and they'll stand above you and walk away. That's right and take a part of you with them." The 13-song album ends in an upbeat waltz titled "Take Me

With You When You Go” which features a lonesome fiddle playing in the background and surreal vocals. In it White sings “and the thought of not knowing that what’s going on in my eyes or my hands could be robbing, without any knowledge or knowing that helping yourself could be hurting or harming someone.”

*Blunderbuss* is a bright star in White’s career. This complicated and diverse offering has everything you could hope for in a musical collection and accents his journey as one of the truly great artists of his time. Once you listen to this album, I’m sure you will agree with me that Jack White is not just a pretty face.

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<sup>i</sup> Harrington, Richard. "The White Stripes, Plain and Simple." *The Washington Post*: 13. Mar 29 2002. *ProQuest Central*. Web. 23 Sep. 2012.