



## Away from the mainstream

### Malcolm Middleton

**M**alcolm Middleton is truly something. Since, officially leaving Arab Strap in 2006, he has been a very busy man. With the release of 2007's *A Brighter Beat* and the single *We're All Going to Die*, which made it to Number 26 in the race for the Christmas Number One in 2007, Malcolm has developed a new era for "happy music for sad people." He says, "It was a joke that got out of hand, but I was a willing participant. I suppose, as it got nearer to the date, I thought, 'what if, what if.' I did do a few things that I enjoyed. I am not a mainstream musician or name, and suddenly I was thrown into this place where people were looking at me like I was trying to break into their house."

There is something inspiring about watching him perform. Perhaps it's the soft-spoken, Scottish accent or hearing actual emotion behind his lyrics, but there is something downright superb about Malcolm Middleton. Now, if you were in to Arab Strap in the late 1990s, you would have already been a fan, but with *A Brighter Beat* and the new album *Sleight of Heart*, which was released in March 2008, it can only be said that Malcolm Middleton's time as a solo artist has come.

Malcolm's song writing and overall character are genuine. After spending most of 2007 touring with *A Brighter Beat*, he decided to start recording a new album. "Things change all the time. I suppose I am a bit more confused about life. I am just at a point where I am deciding what to do next, where to go musically and not to repeat

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myself too much, as well as figuring out how to do something different, but still something that I am happy with. It's all a work in progress."

*Sleight of Heart* is a departure from *A Brighter Beat*, in that it includes covers. "I have to be careful with what I say about it. I already get quite offended when people starting saying it's an album of leftovers and bits and pieces, but really there are three new songs on it — *Blue Plastic Bags*, *Loves Comes in Waves* and *Follow Robin Down*. The first two, I really wanted to release them as soon as possible because I felt they were of their time. I had the idea of doing a small EP, but it grew into six songs, while songs like *Week Off* and *Total Belief* have been kicking around since *Into the Woods* (2004). I never found a way to record them that I was happy with. I thought, now is the time to strip it back, and not to worry too much about it, so it came together and eventually an acoustic EP grew into a 9-track album. *A Brighter Beat* was hard work, so it was great to do something more natural."

This summer sees Malcolm doing a bit of touring and then heading back to the studio to do some more recording. "I have some new songs written that I need to get recorded, but we'll have to see what's what, I don't want overkill!"

In all honesty, as long as Malcolm keeps recording, we'll keep listening. For dates or info please visit: [www.malcolmmiddleton.co.uk](http://www.malcolmmiddleton.co.uk).

Shirley Stevenson