

Brodie Milner: Hedonism, disillusion, and maintaining artistic integrity in the modern day

Despite being self-described as 'hugely, hugely pretentious', Brodie Milner's new EP is about everything but himself

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Despite describing himself as 'hugely, hugely pretentious', Brodie Milner's new EP is about everything but himself. As we discuss his upcoming release in a bustling coffee shop in Leeds, he discusses how, in music, "if you use the word 'I' and if it's in first-person, there's quite a big assumption that it's autobiographical". *Holy Ghost Survivors Group (Vol 1.)* could not be further from this notion. It tells an arcing narrative from a variety of characters' perspectives all surrounding religion, mental health, and a strangely beautiful sense of despair surrounding the two. Both 'God i' and 'Convenience Store Gospel' contain lines about God taking sertraline, an SSRI anti-depressant, 'A Hateful Song' describes a rapture with barbiturates, and 'Drinking Martinis in the Olive Gardens of Gethsemane' is all about the 'Messianic blues'.

Born and raised in Bridlington, Brodie Milner began his career playing folk gigs in the nearby village of Sewerby. Independent venues and artists were a vital part of his musical journey as a young adult, and in turn Milner recognises the importance of community-funded arts, despite them often not being well-attended. "It's amazing that they're still providing a platform for independent musicians to have the place to perform stuff, and, it's maybe indicative of a wider cultural thing, that less people are interested in going out to see live music, which is really sad, and I feel like people are definitely missing out."

Later in life, Brodie Milner moved to Hull for his studies, where he bore witness to a scene that would end up being the inception of 'Martinis'. "There was a guy in his Sunday best, and he was absolutely battered. He was obviously in a bit of a bad way," he recalls. "He kept shouting this phrase 'heavyweight champion of the world, Jesus Christ'.

There's this disparity here of someone praising a saviour who is not helping him."

Though Milner's inspiration for this track derived from his personal gripes with the modern-day representation of Jesus, he is keen to outline the fact that this isn't a point-blank critique of religion. "The Jesus Christ that white nationalists have taken on board is a very different person to who is represented in scripture. We're talking about religion, but it's a structure of power that is being co-opted by powerful people to justify their own means." By making this point through the vessel of the West's most prominent religious figure, 'Martinis' takes a big risk and pulls it off completely. If singing from the perspective of a harshly jaded Jesus with a ruthless tone of voice wasn't enough, the line, 'I ask myself every day, "what would Kendrick want to say?"' was initially an even bolder statement. "The original line for that was a reference to Kanye West."

Though Milner wanted to reference Kanye in a very much satirising manner, rap and hip-hop have had a huge impact on his personal musical journey. "The reason why I loved those Kendrick records is that I feel like every time I come back to it, there's something that I've missed," he says, "Listening back to it you can pick out different things, and I always feel like I've got a strong connection to music that does that." He picks out the song 'Saviour' specifically, which has an emphasis on twisted faith, false saviours and how the daily experience of a black man can never be understood by non-people-of-colour ('one protest for you, 365 for me'). Milner talks about how this album-spanning narrative opened his eyes to what records can be.

Anais Mitchell's 'Hadestown' is another inspiration for Brodie Milner, not just in its story but its representation of Greek myths and 'story characters' too. "The way that Greek mythology deals with god, I found more interesting than how monotheism deals with god," he says, "I wanted to do this thing where the characters live in a world and there's a story if you wanna dig around for it, and they sort of interact, and they are sort of self contained."

This more inventive outlook on gods and religion is represented best in the relationship between the tracks 'Martinis' and 'God i'. As previously mentioned, the former discusses wealth and power disparities through the eyes of a weary, angry Jesus, whereas 'God i' is told through the eyes of God himself. The sense of interconnection is strong here, with the two singles feeling almost like a conversation, echoing 'Father and Son' by Yusuf/Cat Stevens. This father speaks on how his biggest crime was not having the patience to be kind, and talks directly to his followers in the lines 'the image that I made you in was mine, and somewhere, someplace, sometime, all joy inside me died'. The narrative so far has so many connecting dots that all lead back to a harrowingly accurate mirror reflecting the reality of modern society.

The depths of human experience that Brodie Milner manages to touch across his eight total released tracks are astounding. His EP *'Holy Ghost Survivor Group (Vol. 1)'* comes out on the 8th May.