

BENJAMIN DEAN WILSON

SMALL TALK



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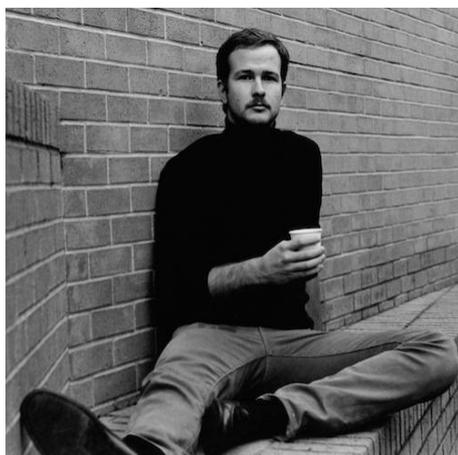
Tracklist

1. Sadie And The Fat Man
2. So Cool
3. William
4. End Of Never Again
5. My Wife
6. Rick, I Tick Tock

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- File under: **Pop-Noir Mini-Dramas / Midwest Nouvelle Vague / So Cool**
- For fans of: **Divine Comedy, Nick Lowe, Serge Gainsbourg, Adam Green**

Evening at the Tapete office. Outside it's dark. Almost time to call it a day. Then, an email: Subject: Demos. "My name is Ben Wilson. I wrote, played all the instruments, and recorded my new album on a 1/2 inch 8-track. Here is a link to some songs from the album. Thanks, Ben"

It's no lie. We do actually listen to every demo we receive – including this submission, with its refreshingly prosaic description. So we clicked. And after a few bars, people begin to listen up. All the tip-tapping on the keyboards grinds to a halt. A voice that is reminiscent of **Nick Lowe**, songs and lyrics that recall **The Magnetic Fields** – just the other way around: Where Stephin Merritt cultivates the art of the two-to-three minute song, Wilson's songs are longer ... much longer. The grand finale "Rick, I Tick Tock ..." lasts for **14 minutes**. The first impression: The Gaslight Café in Greenwich Village in 1965, a few über-cool Bohemians under the guidance of **Ray Davies** and/or **Serge Gainsbourg** (compare Anna/Bande Originale De La Comédie Musicale) anticipate the **Abbey Road** medley. We listen more closely: A musical drama in three acts, including stage directions sung out loud. Jimmy (recently divorced) and Rick (unhappily married) get to know a young woman on a train, decide to forget about going into work and instead opt for a picnic à trois. Meanwhile: Rick's son is bitten by a dog; his suicidal wife has to take Junior to a doctor. Her mood is accordingly dismal and worsens as she happens to pass a certain park ... Interesting. Is this the work of a passionate cinephile? Who is Ben Wilson, anyway? Not an easy one to google.

Meanwhile, night has fallen at the Tapete office. But music like this is the reason to work at a record company. It's a brilliant record – so we asked Ben a few questions.

Q: Where do you live?

Ben: In Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Q: Who were your influences for the production of "Small Talk"?

Ben: It may be surprising, but I like classical music. I have season tickets to the symphony and listen to a lot of **Schubert, Bach, Saint-Saens, Janacek** etc. But also **Queen, Meatloaf, Dylan, Cohen**. Last year I got into Shel Silverstein's work with Dr. Hook. And **Trey Parker** and **Matt Stone's** compositions for their television and Broadway shows.

Q: Perhaps a few films made an impression?

Ben: Of course, the films of **Rohmer, Fassbinder** and **Bergmann** influenced my writing. And **Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Nabokov** – and **South Park** and **The Simpsons**.

Q: Where and how did you record "Small Talk"?

Ben: I have a studio at home. A very small studio, crammed with instruments. I'm not exaggerating: It's the cosiest studio in Oklahoma. I'm a mathematics student and I typically sleep until noon (I arranged my classes so that university starts earliest at 5 p.m.). So I did most of the recording between 12 and 4. It's a good time – there's less traffic outside the house and it's nice and quiet. I'm not a trained engineer. For a few years I was a film projectionist, so I guess I have an affinity for analogue machines.

Q: What should be on the cover?

Ben: A picture of me with a mustache.

A new day at the Tapete Building. Once again, we congratulate ourselves on the fabulous idea of really listening to every demo. Benjamin Dean Wilson might otherwise have escaped us. "Small Talk" is a great album: songs about aging (sung by a young man), songs about illusions and losing them, about young mothers about the teacher Mr. Green, about Rick, Jimmy and Sharon, about Nurse Hirsch a red Corvette, about the suspicious mother-in-law of a local celebrity, a nameless actor and his childhood sweetheart Sadie (she wore a boyish haircut, quite short). It's an album full of twists and surprises, full of humor and truth: "But Sadie told me she would see me again / And said, "Be a good person till then!"