

Bryn Christopher Bio

If My World, Bryn's debut album, sounds like the work of an assured, confident, old-school soul man trapped in the body of a new kid on the pop block itching to make his mark, that shouldn't come as a surprise. Ask him about his own songs, and he'll talk to you about addiction, undervaluing yourself, the Iraq war and writing lyrics on his mobile phone. If you want soul-steeped authenticity in 21st century togs, Bryn Christopher's your man.

Bryn was brought up in Great Barr, Birmingham, one of four children born to a black father and a white mother. His parents separated before Bryn's seventh birthday, and he was raised by his mother and maternal grandmother. Painfully skinny, with different interests from the other kids, Bryn was teased mercilessly and began to dread going to school, until he joined a youth theatre company at the age of 12. Here he discovered a sense of confidence and the kind of pop music - Alicia Keys, Michael Jackson - that he could relate to.

He joined a soul band at his secondary school and wrote his first songs as part of his music GCSE. But perhaps the pivotal moment in his aural education came when Bryn and some school friends attended a play and heard Try A Little Tenderness sung on the backing track by someone who clearly wasn't The Commitments... "I was shouting out to my friends during the play," he recalls. "I was like, This guy is amazing! Who is it?' I'd never heard anyone sing like that. And someone told me it was Otis Redding."

A crash-course in Redding's music turned Bryn's musical life upside down: suddenly, he knew that he wanted to make music with this combination of passionate intensity and melodic accessibility. He then discovered Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder. "It was incredible suddenly being exposed to these unbelievable people that had been around all this time whose existence I had no idea of. It totally changed my outlook."

Doing something about it was another matter. He was living in a small town with no musical mentor and with peers who were happier hanging out on the streets playing football. "I could definitely have ended up in a very different place if I'd given in to the bullies. You either beat them or join them". So with a massive desire to be a successful singer, a determined teenage Bryn went against the grain.

With no real idea how to break into the music industry Bryn was tempted, like most young singers are these days, towards auditioning for talent shows. He's thankful now that it proved a non-starter. "It was a learning curve - I didn't know any other way, I had no-one to tell me what was right and wrong and I couldn't think of any other way to move forward as a wannabe singer in the town I was living". He now marvels at his narrow escape. "Those things have had some really talented people that have come through them but I often catch the shows and think 'thank God I didn't end up there. It's just not me'.

Instead Bryn got a scholarship to a top London stage school, where he spent a largely unhappy two years before catching the attention of the management team who brought him to Polydor's Colin Barlow. For Barlow, Bryn's appeal was instant: "His voice just floored me," he says.

Finally, things began to happen for 21-year-old Bryn. The first show he played for a potential publisher saw the deal done and dusted that very night. A similar thing happened when the support for the Amy Winehouse tour came up, one of the highest-profile string of dates in 2007. "I knew everybody else was going up for it," he says, still slightly dumbfounded at being given the chance. "Amy gets to choose who she wants, so she must've liked my music." He doesn't know for sure, though, as he never got to meet her. "She would turn up and go straight on stage," he recalls. "Anyway, her husband had just been sent to prison: I was hardly going to be going up to her and going, 'Hi! What do you think of my music?' And I wasn't expecting her to stop and chat."

Bryn secured the biggest live agent in the US (William Morris) following his Winehouse support stint – Marc Geiger from William Morris said the following about him: "When we heard Bryn Christopher sing it was instantaneous and undeniable. That's why we took him on as booking agents for the US. He's a born performer with a voice that will no doubt make him a legend."

For Bryn's album 'My World' it was an experimental writing session with Australian producer/songwriter Jarrad Rogers (whose string of writer-producer-multi-instrumental credits look sure to be eclipsed when his new group, SugaRush Beat Company, release their debut album this summer) that proved another turning point. The song they wrote together – 'Gone Gone Gone' - instantly eclipsed everything Bryn had worked on before.

"That first song with Jarrad, it was all written and recorded in two hours," Bryn says of his intuitive partnership with Rogers. "It's what I've always wanted, but for it to just happen like that was surreal."

Bryn also worked with production crew Midi Mafia who managed to secure the exclusive rights to use samples from songs from the famous Stax/East Memphis catalogue for the first time ever on his debut album, a massive coup. They've used a sample from Eddie Floyd's 'Big Bird' for 'Stay With Me', 'Going Home' by Prince Conley for 'Found a New Love' and 'Hot Dog' by The Four Shells on 'Help Me'. Midi Mafia felt Bryn would be great to be the first artist to sing over these samples because his voice and delivery is so reminiscent of that era.

The tracks on 'My World' bristle with the freshness, exuberance and spontaneity of the Christopher/Rogers approach. Opening cut 'Help Me' is Edwin Starr meets Gnarl's Barkley, a strutting, hollering, soul testifying session with a tricked-out nu-school undercarriage. 'The Quest', Christopher's first single, is inspired by his soldier brother's experiences in Baghdad, while 'Smiling' is, he admits, deliberately ambiguous. "Jarrad had already written that song and gave it to me," Bryn explains. "I loved it, but I wanted to change the lyrics, and now it's kind of about being addicted to something – alcohol, food, a person."

First steps first, though. At 22 years of age it's a long career Bryn Christopher's doing his best to build for himself, and he'll take things at the pace they come. "I'd like to make some money of course, but it's the music – me singing – that comes first," he emphasises. "You only get one chance, really, and this is mine."