Connan Mockasin has the kind of deliciously off-kilter and gloriously idiosyncratic worldview that rapidly proves addictive. Once you’ve heard it, you can’t help but wish to go back for more. On his rather unusual childhood activities: “when I was really young my mum got me a welder and just let me turn all the discarded pipes and rubbish on our property into a proper junk yard. I got really obsessed with carnival rides and ghost trains that folded up. Mum said a lot of the neighbours were a bit disgusted…”

Welcome, folks, to the delightful, slanted and enchanted world of Connan Mockasin. Like David Lynch’s wilfully surrealist take on American suburbia, or Richard Prince’s paintings investigating modern cultural tropes, the New Zealand born, current London resident Mockasin makes beautiful, off-kilter music which subverts as it compels, challenges as it mesmerists, startles as it seduces, even drawing fans as diverse as Johnny Marr and Radiohead to Ed Banger chief and ex Daft Punk manager Pedro Winter into its wide-eyed, childlike exploration into the final frontiers of pop music. It is all too rare, in this current climate of manufactured pop acts, grey over produced 'alternative' guitar music and press-fuelled mania for the next-big-thing, to hear something truly striking and original, but a strong case can most certainly be made for Connan to be a true pop auteur, taking his rightful place in a proud lineage which includes past mavericks such as Joe Meek and Brian Wilson, right through to current cult heroes like Ariel Pink, Sufjan Stevens and John Maus.

Written from start to finish one hot summer, while camped outside his parent’s church-like house in a tent, “Forever Dolphin Love” is an LP which brims with the beauty and solitude of summer evenings, a miasma of psychedelic tangents, jazz interludes and echoing guitars which hum with a distant, haunting resonance. Somehow, a peripatetic past – which includes a decamping from his native Te Awanga to London to form Connan And The Mockasins in 2006, before repeating the trip again a few years later to restart as Connan Mockasin – has conspired to produce an album so unique a first-time listener may have to listen to it again just to take it all in, so powerful is the spell it casts. It exists in its very own, free-floating parallel universe; a world where lush psychedelia morphs unpredictably into Spanish salsa (“Faking Jazz Together”), breathtaking, short interludes (“Grandpa Moff”) nestle alongside languidly unravelling epics (the title track) and above it all, Connan’s feather-light, alien vocals gently hover – not always in English, by the way, but sometimes in their own, made-up language – tantalisingly, beguilingly out of reach.

Indeed, it is hard to believe that anyone who could dream up an album this strange (and strangely gorgeous) could have loved people as mainstream as Prince, Michael Jackson and the B-52’s when he was younger, as Connan once did, but certainly, there is nothing about him that is conventional, nodding as much to people like Wayne Coyne and Micachu And The Shapes in his multidisciplinary talent. For apart from being one of the most singular musicians we currently have, he is also a brilliant and unusual painter, a gift which will be glimpsed for the first time with the upcoming album, which features a collection of wonderfully surreal paintings of the dolphins, all bold and beautiful interpretations of the mammal, but evolved into human forms, stood smiling in gaggles, sometimes wearing clothes, sometimes swathed in pools of lush colours. “I’ve never been that confident with showing people my pictures”, he admits. “But I’ve been made to with the release of this album, which is good. I need that. I’ve always loved drawing". Connan's talents also include recording, producing and mixing the entire record.

It was this brilliantly ingenious approach to invention, and his masterfully unique charm that caught the attention of Erol Alkan, who signed Connan to his label Phantasy after hearing initial demos for the record. On first seeing Connan play live at DURRR in London: "He was completely out of step with everything else out there, performing some of the most beautiful songs I had heard in years, to hundreds of people in a crowded nightclub, and being able to silence them to the low volume of his music. Having that power is rare.'

Having previously released records for kindred spirits Late Of The Pier and avant guard experimentalist Babe Terror, Connan has become the first artist to release a full album through Alkan's Phantasy, a perfect home for an artist who will undoubtedly evolve and reincarnate (and possibly re-invent?) over time. Finally finding his feet with his own sound, Connan, who had become “sick of playing to people who didn’t like what I was doing”, returned to London, to discover a collective of like-minded experimental artists such as Micachu & The Shapes and The Invisible, as well as Late Of The Pier’s Sam Eastgate (who Connan is currently working with on the side project Soft Hair), clearing a path for the once perennial outsider as one of the most vibrant and engrossing musicians on the map. You’d do well to clutch him to your hearts now.

www.connanmockasin.com

[www.phantasysound.co.uk](http://www.phantasysound.co.uk)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkNwuY2JUHQ&ob=av2n>