

= Rounds (album) =

Rounds is the third full @-@ length solo album by British electronic musician Kieran Hebden , released under his alias Four Tet on 5 May 2003 by Domino Recording Company . Wanting to make a more personal record , Hebden recorded and produced the album in his North London flat over ten months using a desktop computer and a home hi @-@ fi system . Its ten tracks feature elements of hip @-@ hop , jazz and folk ; apart from a guitar part recorded for " Slow Jam " , the music is composed exclusively from between 200 and 300 samples , many processed beyond recognition .

Rounds produced two singles and one EP . Critics praised the album for its unique fusion of electronic and " organic " styles , and Metacritic lists it as the fourth best @-@ reviewed album of 2003 . Several publications included Rounds on " best albums of the decade " lists . In May 2013 , on the tenth anniversary of its release , Domino reissued Rounds with a bonus disc including a 2004 live performance .

= = Background and recording = =

After being a member of Fridge since 1995 , Kieran Hebden began releasing solo records under the name Four Tet in 1998 . His first release was the " Thirtysixtwentyfive " single , followed by the albums Dialogue in 1999 and Pause in 2001 . The albums were influenced by hip @-@ hop , jazz and electronic music . Hebden felt his output had sounded too much like his influences and wanted to make a record that was more personal and harder to define . Hebden drew on influences from Pete Rock , DJ Premier , Jim O 'Rourke , Timbaland , the Neptunes and Rodney Jerkins .

Hebden recorded Rounds over ten months in his North London flat , using a desktop computer and a home hi @-@ fi system . With the exception of a guitar part recorded for " Slow Jam " , he composed the music exclusively from a file of samples he had assembled over several years . The album uses between 200 and 300 samples ; each song is built from between 20 and 30 samples heavily processed with the software packages AudioMulch and Cool Edit Pro , in many cases beyond recognition . The nine @-@ minute track " Unspoken " was originally based on a sample from the Tori Amos song " Winter " but was reworked when Hebden failed to get sample clearance . Hebden also used a Creative Labs microphone to record the guitar part for " Slow Jam " and some sounds from television and sequenced the results in Cakewalk Pro Audio 9 .

After spending the early part of his career naming his songs with random words , he decided to use more personal titles . " As Serious as Your Life " takes its name from a 1977 Val Wilmer book about free jazz in New York City . Hebden was given a copy of the book by his father and said " I did hope that some kid would get interested and ask what the title was and then check out the book , so it 's a bit like leaving little trails for people . " He was inspired to title the album Rounds after hearing that his sister had been singing a musical round , telling an interviewer : " It seemed totally relevant ; a round is all about repetition and phasing , which is the essence of what I 've been doing since I 've been making music . "

= = Music = =

Rounds contains ten instrumental tracks with a total running time of 45 minutes , which Colin Joyce of Spin called a " folktronica tapestry . " Sound on Sound writer Sam Inglis said that the album was a " blend of fragile acoustic fragments , brutal beats and glitchy electronica " ; The Age described it as " electronic music that sounds deceptively organic . " Guardian critic David Peschek , who noted the influence of hip @-@ hop , R & B and folk music , wrote that " Rounds invents its own dizzying , unlikely genres . " John Bush of AllMusic found the album contained elements of electronic and experimental music combined with " a dreamy melodicism sure to endear it to indie pop fans . " Dusted critic Michael Crumsho noticed the influence of folk and jazz , writing that Hebden had " taken his earlier nods to other specific genres and turned them into something wholly his own . " PopMatters ' Adrien Begrand noted how " Hebden shifts the focus from hip @-@ hop beats , jazz influences , and far @-@ reaching sonic adventurousness , to a more spare , focused sound " that

contributed to Rounds ' original sound . Nick Southall , in his review for Stylus magazine , stated that " it is more of the same , but ' the same ' for Four Tet is perpetual evolution and motion . "

" Unspoken " was named by several critics as the album 's centrepiece ; Begrand described it as " virtuosic laptop music " . NME critic Tony Naylor thought that " As Serious as Your Life " was one of the album 's more straightforward songs . The album 's closing track , " Slow Jam " , which Pitchfork reviewer Andy Beta said " has that long goodbye of the best melancholy closers , " was described by Begrand as a " warm , wide @-@ eyed , watching @-@ the @-@ sun @-@ rise song " that features chiming guitars and a sample of a child 's squeaky toy .

= = Release = =

The track " She Moves She " was released as a 12 @-@ inch single on 31 March 2003 , with " Cradle " on the B @-@ side . Rounds was released on double vinyl and compact disc by Domino on 5 May 2003 , spending one week on the UK Albums Chart at number 60 . The second single , " As Serious as Your Life " , was released in October 2003 on 7- and 12 @-@ inch formats featuring remixes and a 23 @-@ minute live version ; a second 12 @-@ inch of the same song , containing a remix by Jay Dee featuring rapping by Guilty Simpson , was released on 18 November 2003 . An EP , My Angel Rocks Back and Forth , was released in May 2004 , containing Rounds tracks , two remixes , and the unreleased songs " I 've Got Viking in Me " and " All the Chimers " , plus a DVD of music videos for " My Angel Rocks Back and Forth " , " She Moves She " , " As Serious as Your Life " and Pause single " No More Mosquitoes " .

Domino reissued Rounds in May 2013 on double vinyl , CD , and download . The CD and vinyl releases include a bonus CD of live material recorded in 2004 previously only available on the limited edition 2004 live album Live in Copenhagen 30th March 2004 .

= = Reception = =

Rounds received critical acclaim . At Metacritic , which assigns a weighted average score out of 100 to reviews and ratings from mainstream critics , the album received a metascore of 89 based on 26 reviews , indicating " universal acclaim . "

AllMusic reviewer John Bush wrote that " though Rounds is experimental by nature " it " offers something for nearly every audience that could approach it . " Michael Crumsho of Dusted found the album " a musical salvo from an artist who ? s confidently coming into his own " , describing it as " a cozy , evocative soundtrack that ? s as intricate as it is beautiful . " In his review for The Guardian , David Peschek described the album as " a trove of bewitching melody and subtle invention " , and wrote that " Rounds succeeds not only as a meticulously conceived piece of art but also as a moving expression of human warmth . " In NME , Tony Naylor wrote that the album was " extraordinary " , " essential " and " full of remarkable sonic ideas . " Andy Beta , writing for Pitchfork Media , praised the record 's " internal order " which " allows it to stand out against previous laptop explorations of immense record collections " .

Adrien Begrand 's review in PopMatters found that Rounds is " a remarkable record " and that " sublime , computer @-@ crafted recordings like Rounds provides in spades are making the most exciting sounds right now in 2003 . " In Spin , Will Hermes described the album as a " varied trip " and noted " a darker vibe suggesting the influence of Hebden 's labelmate Dan Snaith of Manitoba . " Stylus Magazine writer Nick Southall recognised Hebden 's " perpetual evolution and motion , " declaring that " this is simply a great record of beautiful music . " Robert Christgau 's review of Rounds for the Village Voice argued that Hebden " imagines an aural space in which electronic malfunction is cute rather than annoying or ominous , " using " the computer as music box . " Tom Ridge of The Wire stated that " nothing here sounds like an exercise in genre plundering , " and that " Hebden has devised a musical identity that is distinctly different from his work with Fridge , but both projects share a passion for defying boundaries . "

= = = Accolades = = =

Rounds was ranked number four on the Metacritic list of highest @-@ scoring albums of 2003 , and was named as one of the albums of 2003 by many publications , including the NME , The Wire , The Observer , Prefix magazine , Pitchfork , Drowned in Sound , the BBC , The Face , Q and Uncut .

Several publications rated Rounds as one of the best albums of the decade , with Pitchfork Media placing it at number 123 on their list of the top 200 albums of the 2000s . On similar lists , Drowned in Sound placed it at number 13 , One Thirty BPM placed it at number 99 , and No Ripcord at number 48 . GQ rated it as one of the 40 best albums of the 21st century .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Kieran Hebden .

= = Chart performance = =

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from the album 's liner notes .

Kieran Hebden ? music , production

Additional personnel

Guy Davie ? mastering

Matt Cooper ? layout , design

Jason Evans ? photography