

# John Darnielle

## Quotes

*People, Thinking, Writing, Ideas, Real, Kids, Song, Way, Book, Years, Stuff,  
Want, Stories, Trying, Knows, Kind, Giving, Rocks, Two, Men*

You can get really good reads on your dreams if you think of every character in them as actually being you.

~John Darnielle

There are only two stories: either you go forward or you die.

~John Darnielle

Life is hard, you're tired, and there's disease. The strategy that works for children is to be delighted by the things that delight you.

~John Darnielle

People talk about songwriting or comedy as creative expression, but life is creative expression. Table-making, even nursing, is extraordinarily creative.

~John Darnielle

Books are like rocks. You hold one in your hand and look at it in various lights to get a sense of it, and then when you get a good angle, you throw it through a window to see what happens.

~John Darnielle

There is something fierce and starved about first ideas.

~John Darnielle

Good things never last, bad things never die.

~John Darnielle

I seem to get the best work when I'm angry and depressed and alienated.

~John Darnielle

It usually happens that I have multiple different projects going on at once, and one can be referencing the other.

~John Darnielle

A bands first albums usually not great. When you made the first album, you had a day job and you were still trying to be serious about it.

~John Darnielle

One way you can get really close to God is to sin as hard as you can.

~John Darnielle

I am at a place in my life where the more like a cave I can make my surroundings, the happier I am.

~John Darnielle

Young people like to feel self-righteous, like they're on the right side of things.

~John Darnielle

People will complain that they don't want to wait around for lightning to strike, but why not? If you invest yourself in chance, the potential for disappointment is pretty low.

~John Darnielle

I'm kind of a hermit. Left to my own devices, I won't submerge myself in anything further afield than the driveway.

~John Darnielle

Anything that is within you is a gift. To be able to take possession of that and say, "Whatever it is, I am bigger than it," is to learn to cherish even the hard and painful things.

~John Darnielle

You should avoid seeing too much of yourself anywhere: in the outside world, in others, in the imagined worlds that give you shelter.

~John Darnielle

The studio's a collaborative environment. I just try to let people bring

their own ideas to the songs and see what happens.

~John Darnielle

I think listening to a lot of Lou Reed when I was a teenager is what encouraged me to just sing however felt good to me.

~John Darnielle

I just started writing stuff to kill time on summer evenings. This is why I'm always telling people who ask me what they need to do to succeed to give up, do something else.

~John Darnielle

People say friends don't destroy one another. What do they know about friends?

~John Darnielle

At 23, you can completely, literally reinvent yourself if you want to.

~John Darnielle

Gender relations are a sad story of men talking trash about women all over the world.

~John Darnielle

I grew up in Southern California, so the whole concept of a local music history is still kinda novel to me.

~John Darnielle

I don't celebrate milestones and I don't do anniversary editions. It's not my style to reflect on accomplishments.

~John Darnielle

I just started going to shows. I don't know how submerged I am: I feel guilty that I don't get out more, but I really like being inside the house.

~John Darnielle

It makes me envious of anybody who can say truly that they don't care what anybody thinks of what they do, because I care a lot about the people who like my stuff.

~John Darnielle

Labor for a lot of people has a negative connotation. But not for me. I always want to be working.

~John Darnielle

Giving up and doing something else (nursing, for me) was exactly what eventually led me to making music that other people wanted to hear.

~John Darnielle

I do have a romantic interest in outlasting everybody else. There's a sort of sad machismo to singer-songwriters, I think.

~John Darnielle

I'll keep making records until I don't have more ideas for records.

~John Darnielle

I'm sort of a cavedweller: I miss my house, my yard, my kitchen, my wife. The trees. When I get home, I like to get down into my office neighborhood as soon as I can.

~John Darnielle

I grew up around some people whose parents toured a lot: tough on the marriage, tough on the kids.

~John Darnielle

I'm not really a goal-oriented guy. I started doing the Mountain Goats just for the sheer hell of it.

~John Darnielle

I don't write my own publicity materials, I just read 'em and give 'em the

OK.

~John Darnielle

For me, moving is always a big opportunity. Its just a enough of a shift in outlook that every time I move, it seems to open something up.

~John Darnielle

I think The Sunset Tree is really the album on which I really learned to trust other musicians, which is so important.

~John Darnielle

Back in the 90s, if you did mail order in music, you could make a good living doing it if you could hustle.

~John Darnielle

Adulthood is interesting to adults. But I would never want to write about stuff I dont feel everybody can connect to.

~John Darnielle

When you know where somebody is, you know the most important thing about them.

~John Darnielle

I don't really have any position to complain about my job. Yeah, every job has its moments like, "Ah, you know, it's Wednesday." But I'm blessed. I love my work.

~John Darnielle

Conservative forces in the South have a lot of power - almost dynastic - dating back many years.

~John Darnielle

Our [former] governor [Pat McCrory] was supposed to be a moderate, but he found himself beholden to people who have much more

draconian ideas. I think he assumed this stuff flew under the radar.

~John Darnielle

Human beings are selfish by nature. Everything that happens to a child, you immediately grab your own child and say, "I will never let that happen to you."

~John Darnielle

I was 14 or 15 when I discovered poetry, and I pretty much stopped writing prose until Master of Reality.

~John Darnielle

I'm so disconnected from an indie-rock community that I am the hermit people used to guess I was.

~John Darnielle

There are real teachers out there; I don't pretend to have their mantle.

~John Darnielle

You're not really going to know what a place is like 'til you've lived there a few years - you sort of just have to go with your gut.

~John Darnielle

The possibility of disaster remains horrific to me. Like when you know everything's about to go wrong in a way that's not controllable or knowable.

~John Darnielle

It's hard always to say what it is one likes about a place, for me. I feel it.

~John Darnielle

Anger is preverbal, so, by the time you're using words to express an angry feeling, you're already imposing loads of structure on that primal

experience.

~John Darnielle

I think it's a misconception that metal's about anger, obviously.

~John Darnielle

In death metal, a lot of guys are Eddie Van Halen disciples, but they take his style to really expressionistic places. It's a real pleasure for me to hear people pushing their craft.

~John Darnielle

I enjoy hearing people who are good at their instruments and who've found a distinctive voice.

~John Darnielle

There are so many ways to respond to music besides feeling like someone's communicating with you. It gives me a charge.

~John Darnielle

I know it's a cliché to say I write for myself, but I write for myself.

~John Darnielle

When I was a kid, I was a big science fiction fan, but current horror books were harder to get your hands on.

~John Darnielle

If you're standing in the middle of a ring and you're playing the villain, and everyone is booing and throwing things at you, that's real.

~John Darnielle

I usually kind of can't wait until my records leak. Back in the day, you could give people tapes, but you can't do that anymore, because it would be available to everyone on the planet within an hour.

~John Darnielle



You can get into anything if you are determined. I always thought that with music, too.

~John Darnielle

There's this idea that there was a point in our childhood when we were in some way better than we are now and we should try to hang on to that.

~John Darnielle

I start writing, pull whatever images happen to occur to me and make up a story, instead of starting with details that are real and I know of and going from there.

~John Darnielle

I get nostalgic about having lived in Ames, Iowa, even though being a vegetarian in Iowa is not fun.

~John Darnielle

I still get really excited looking at stuff that I've seen every day for 20 years.

~John Darnielle

Literature is a mystical place for me. It's not dry. It's where miracles happen.

~John Darnielle

Kayfabe is kind of a code. To break kayfabe is to let people know that the punch was not real and that the match was scripted.

~John Darnielle

If you get into a fight and somebody punches you, you get two feelings. One: That really hurts. Two: That relief in the realness of, like, Wow, this is what it is. It's not an intellectual process.

~John Darnielle

You always feel like your 18-year-old self in some sense. And that's what walking through New York on a June evening feels like - you feel like it's Friday and you're 17 years old.

~John Darnielle

Everybody is in various states of needing to transcend something. I believe in mental health care, but when we call people "crazy," we exclude them from our circle.

~John Darnielle

If my songs are being listened to between any other songs, that is awesome, and I'm glad people are getting something out of them.

~John Darnielle

It's a cliché to state that one should think like a child, but it's clear that kids know something that the world tries to make you unlearn later in life.

~John Darnielle

My son, who sees me almost every day of his life, will look at me and go, "I know that dude! I like that dude!" It's incredibly affirming.

~John Darnielle

The reality of having a kid involves day-to-day practicality - not broader philosophical outlooks.

~John Darnielle

You learn to present dark things without including their ability to harm, treasuring them for what they are.

~John Darnielle

I don't understand being idle; I don't have an idle setting. I probably should develop one.

~John Darnielle

I couldn't name more than a couple of good drum'n'bass acts, and I have no idea what's big in the dance world right now.

~John Darnielle

Take dance music: I like enough of it and its history to be able to say a word or two about this or that record, but I'm nobody's authority.

~John Darnielle

The more I learn about stuff the more conscious I become of grave gaps in my knowledge.

~John Darnielle

The process of touring is always so weird to me. Once you've made the album, that's over, you move along.

~John Darnielle

People want you to play the songs they know. I try not to reflect too much, and I don't really like to focus too much on myself.

~John Darnielle

I always worry that I'm a dilettante: I know something about lots of things but don't have exhaustive knowledge of much.

~John Darnielle

As an artist, you always have to be growing. You don't just want to do what you already know people like.

~John Darnielle

I crave music that'll sort of hurtle me into space and release me up there.

~John Darnielle

I wrote short stories when I was a teenager, but they weren't any good and I kinda knew it.

~John Darnielle

People involved in my personal life make fun of me a lot for not being jaded.

~John Darnielle

It's easy to follow national politics and weigh in on social media, but if I'm tweeting stuff about Chatham County, no one cares.

~John Darnielle

This is the funny thing about me. People think John just comes up with all the ideas. I'm honored. People think I have a big old brain, but actually I am the sum of the people I work with.

~John Darnielle

I am a person of high energy. That, and I sit down and I write when I get an idea - I put other things aside.

~John Darnielle

Music is a permanent art, it will always go through phases where you like it and are in tune with it, but saying that music "got bad" is infantile. The same is true with your life.

~John Darnielle

Diagnoses exist to help get people services they need - but there's no such thing as mental illness. We're all mentally ill.

~John Darnielle

From a very young age, I was the kind of kid you can just put anywhere and I'd still find stuff to be stoked about.

~John Darnielle

I don't like to say, "Oh, I don't like this kind of music." I like to listen to it and try to see what people who like it get out of it.

~John Darnielle

When you punish a person for dreaming his dream, don't expect him to thank or forgive you.

~John Darnielle

What's scary is the unknown, the stuff you can't put your finger on.

~John Darnielle

Over the past 40 years, the tradition of Southern progressivism has been somewhat successfully erased by right-wing revisionist historians.

~John Darnielle

Do every stupid thing that makes you feel alive.

~John Darnielle

I always want to try and see what the appeal is in anything. It's the healthiest and most honest approach.

~John Darnielle

Everybody experiences reality in a way that's only true for them.

~John Darnielle

I really love Durham more than any place I've ever been; some small towns can be really provincial and strangling, but Durham is the best city in the world.

~John Darnielle

My work is more important than I am. I'm just some guy.

~John Darnielle

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