



## Uncle Earl “**She Waits For Night**” Rounder Records

Although K.C. Groves was party to recording the first Uncle Earl album a few years ago, and excluding a couple of limited edition mini-albums that appeared last year, “**She Waits For Night**” sees this old-time string band finally come of age. The band line-up on their sophomore full release is founder K.C. Groves [mandolin, guitar], Kristin Andreassen [guitar, feet], Rayna Gellert [fiddle, guitar] and Abigail Washburn [banjo]. By way of adding colour the lead vocal is shared among the band members throughout the recording, while Andreassen’s “*feet*,” she’s an accomplished clog dancer, can be heard on a couple of cuts. In concert, currently, they’re a five-piece unit Sharon Gilchrist [bass, mandolin] having joined Uncle Earl after this album was recorded.

This collection finds the g’Earl’s drawing heavily on traditional music sources, with a decade of cuts bearing the credit Trad. Arr. They’ve also covered what seems like an ages old Dillards’ composition, and have included one original each penned by Kristin and Abigail. The fourteenth and final cut, “Take These Chains,” a writing collaboration by the four band members, features a Washburn lead vocal - supported by K.C. and Kristin - and while not totally at odds musically with the other material here it confirms that Uncle Earl possesses a contemporary edge that should be explored further. For me it’s the best track on “**She Waits For Night**.” All of the current band members, including Gilchrist, have been party to releasing solo or band albums featuring original material, prior to and since joining Uncle Earl, so an Uncle Earl recording featuring only original material is well within their capacity.

K.C. takes the lead vocal on the Rodney Dillard/Mitch Jayne “There Is A Time,” a wistful ballad that first appeared on “**The Dillards Live! Almost!**” [1964] and Kristin can be heard clog dancing on this cut. The up-tempo fiddle led “Booth Shot Lincoln” is one of three instrumentals here, the others, being “Sullivan’s Hollow” - also fiddle led, and merging banjo and fiddle “Old Bunch Of Keys” also includes more clogging from Kristin.

Andreassen penned the ballad “Pale Moon” and she’s also the lead vocalist on this cut and on “Sugar Babe,” plus one of the album’s two foot-stomping hoedown’s “Ida Red.” A sailor who proves unfaithful is shot dead by his lover in “Willie Taylor” and the cut features a Rayna Gellert lead vocal. Gellert also takes the lead on “Sleepy Desert,” in which the narrator relates her recent loss of love. As the call and response lyric to “How Long” unfolds, each member of the quartet steps up to the microphone and vocally delivers a verse. As for Abigail Washburn’s lead vocal on her gospel styled composition “Divine,” it’s supported by *heavenly* a cappella harmony vocals from the other band members. Washburn also fulfils the role of lead vocalist on the album opener and hoedown “Walkin’ In My Sleep” and, later, on the lyrically gospel tinged “Warfare.”

This recording was produced by the hugely talented Dirk Powell [Balfa Toujoures, solo], and some tracks feature him playing banjo or accordian, plus there are contributions on triangle from his wife Christine Balfa and bass guitarist Dan Rose. Stepping up to the microphone and delivering a finger blistering solo on fiddle, guitar, banjo or mandolin at 120 notes/min. is not what this band is about in terms of instrumental and musical dexterity. These girls simply kick off each tune and play the hell out of it till it’s done, plus they’re prone to delivering heavenly sounding vocals along the way, and when the tune is done they simply call out, in unison, “*Next*.”

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

**Arthur Wood.**

Kerrville Kronikles 09/05.