



Various Artists **"The Kennebunk Coffeehouse – Best Of 5 Live"** Cornmeal Records

This seventeen-song compilation celebrates the five years that the Kennebunk Coffeehouse has been in existence. On the second Saturday of every month, the Coffeehouse convenes at the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church in this York County, Southern Maine town to listen to the songs of acoustic music troubadours from far and wide. The Coffeehouse is the brainchild of Shawn Henderson, music fan and long-time contributor to the web pages of Folkwax. As we'll see, the tracks on this disc feature opening acts as well as headliners – a *magnanimous gesture*, and the crystal clear recordings span the period late 2002 through to the summer of 2004. An Aboriginal *dot painting* adorns the front of the CD liner insert, featuring the body and part of the neck of an acoustic guitar with the number 5 inset on the soundboard just below the bridge, and is the work of local artist Pat Olstad. One the rear of the CD case is a photograph of Church clock tower.

Patrick Fitzsimmons, formerly drummer/vocalist with the NW New Jersey band, From Good Homes [*], opens the disc, with his epistle to the passage of time "The Changing," the title cut from his 2001 solo debut. Many of the artists appearing on this disc, currently make their home in New England. For instance, Lori McKenna, the youngest of six siblings and a married mother of five, lives close to the South Stoughton, Massachusetts home where she was raised. McKenna's "If You Ask" pursues the theme of alienation within relationships with, "*I want to be your lover, I don't want to be your policeman.*" On November 17th 2002, Lori was the opening act for headliner Patty Larkin, whose instrumental and song contribution "Handful Of Water"/"Who Holds Your Hand?", reprises cuts from, respectively, "**Regrooving The Dream**" [2000] and "**Angels Running**" [1993]. A percussive guitarist, I believe Larkin to be one of the finest six string players in acoustic music, bar none.

Darryl Purpose's subtly titled "Mr. Schwinn" is tale of love lavished on bicycles by the owner of a repair shop, while, sadly, in his personal life, there is no partner with whom he can exchange affection. An Ayrshire born Scot, now based in Ayer's Cliff, Quebec, David Francey, began writing "Morning Train" in Tonder, Denmark in 2003 while there to appear in the annual music festival. A cut from his latest album "**Waking Hour**" [to be released by Red House early next year], verse on verse this socio-political commentary witnesses appearances by Jesus, Buddha, Allah and the Devil, and the four verses each close with "*He said, "After all, everybody's riding on this train."*" The as yet unrecorded "Sycamore," by New Hampshire based opening act Craig Werth, was captured at the David Francey concert.

Recorded at Kennebunk some two weeks after the summer 2004 release of his latest album "**Symphony In 16 Bars**," keyboard player Kenny White [Linda Ronstadt, Kim Carnes] performs the track "Shoot The Moon." Mark Erelli's 9/11 song, "The Only Way," was the opening cut on last year's Ellis Paul/Vance Gilbert collaboration "**Side Of The Road**," and here the pair deliver a soulful performance. I understand that John Gorka is a particular favourite with Shawn Henderson and, at the piano, Gorka performs the anti-war/spiritually based "Let Them In" from "**The Company You Keep**" [2001]. The melodic tribute to travellers "On The Road" is the opening cut on New Hampshire based, Tom Dean's 1999 debut "**Your Own Backyard**." Dean was once a member of Devonsquare.

There's a note on the rear of the CD insert that runs to "*This album is dedicated to the memory and spirits of John Lennon.*" Pursuing that *train of thought* Lucy Kaplansky performs Carter's "Cowboy Singer"- a lyrically clever tale that contrasts the innocence of youth with the depravity that sometimes comes with age. The earthbound comment "*I look like the devil, And I'm feeling like hell,*" and the

heavenly insight that “*The labels don’t care if you’re old or you’re young, And the Martin’s are cheaper, And the pastures are greener*” always crease me up. Up there in heaven, I bet Dave already has angels spreading the word about this *recently arrived, stunning new songwriter*. Philadelphia born guitar whiz Ed Gerhard has made his home in New England for over quarter of a century, and he closes this collection with the Lennon & McCartney segue, “If I Fell”/”In My Life.”

Elsewhere on this collection there are cuts by The Waybacks [“Been Around”], Sara Cox [“Look Up”], Don Campbell [“Heart of A Tennessee Town”], Ed Jurdi [“Keep On Trying”] and Don Conoscenti [“What Else Could I Do?”]. The sale of this charity CD will fund venue improvements as well as ensure the provision of future shows at the Kennebunk Coffeehouse, and details of the disc available on the web at http://www.kennebunkcoffeehouse.com/CD_page.html and it can be purchased from shawn@kennebunkcoffeehouse.com The CD is also available on the web at Village Records [<http://www.villagerecords.com>] and CD Baby [<http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/Kennebunk>].

Note.

[*] – When From Good Homes broke up in 1999, Fitzsimmons relocated to Vermont, while fellow band member Todd Sheaffer formed the *supergroup* Railroad Earth.

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood
Kerrville Kronikles 11/04