



Kimmie Rhodes **"Windblown"** Songbird Records

Checking the **"Windblown"** CD artwork before listening to a note of music, I spotted on the rear of the case that the ten tracks were divided into Act One and Act Two. What's more, four of the five song titles in Act 2 were distinctly Mexican sounding. According to the press sheet that arrived with the disc, barring an instrumental cut written by her son, contributing musician and album producer, Gabe Rhodes, plus one co-written tune, Kimmie penned the remaining eight songs. It appears that this suite is the soundtrack to a performance art piece – *interpretative dance performed to live music* - that will make its world debut in Conroe, Texas in late January 2005. Narrating the piece, and taking the role of a number of legendary *"spirits of the west"* will be one of Kimmie's long time collaborators, Joe Sears. The pair previously worked, as writers [and as performers], on a number of musicals and reviews including **"Small Town Girl," "Hillbilly Heaven"** and **"Doing God's Chores."** The support players on this recording include Kimmie's husband Joe Gracey [rhythm guitar], Lloyd Maines [dobro, pedal steel] and Richard Bowden [violin, viola, mandolin].

Quoting from the press release, the tale that unfolds in **"Windblown"** is that of a *"young woman who has exiled herself to the wilderness of the Texas Big Bend [*] in a struggle to escape the sorrows of her border-town life and the band choices she has made."* Taking the role of the *young woman*, Kimmie delivers the lyrics in the first person [from here on let's refer to her as, the narrator]. By way of setting the scene, in the seasonally tinged opening track "Windblown," the narrator describes life in Big Bend with *"Winter's that seem not to end, Go out like a lion and then, Springtime comes straggling in all windblown"* having prefaced the latter with the question/answer, *"Why anyone lives on the plane nobody knows."* Later, there's the image, *"a dust devil danced down the street"* – that then deposits trash and leaves - *"like a gift it just fell at my feet, all windblown,"* while the track closes with the heartfelt *"What a treasure your memory is, even if it's all windblown."*

In the second track "Oh Padre," the narrator expresses contrition as the lyric moves on to reveal snatches of the story so far. The initial *"I have myself to blame for my sorrow and my shame, I've brought only death and pain to those who love me"* is later addressed with the more specific *"Oh to lay me down beside him in the ground, But my soul was not allowed where his could go"* and following the final chorus there's the revelation, *"I never meant to do him harm."* It's hardly unexpected that Tex-Mex rhythms stylistically form the backbone of the music, and the instrumental opening half of "Lost In You Again" gives way to the conclusion *"I swear when I reach this journey's end, I won't get lost in you again."* Set to a gentle shuffle beat, in "That's My Heart," co-written with Kent Robbins, the narrator contemplates falling in love again, while the motion filled melody that accompanies the *lost dreams* recalled in "Desert Train" – *"Came out here to wash my hands, Cleanse my sins in these ancient sands, Oh but I found no place out here to hide my sorrow"* - closes Act 1.

Act 2 opens with Gabe's melodically happy-go-lucky borderland instrumental "Laredo Cantina," and the shuffle paced "Little Angelina" which follows, opens with a young mother abandoning her young baby and closes with the baby being given a home. Any self-respecting Tom Russell fan will tell you that "El Diablo Gallo" translates as "The Devil Rooster," and it transpires that it is also an instrumental, and a, at times, spirited one that includes some fine string work from Richard Bowden. In the penultimate cut, *"In the silence of the midnight,"* the spirit of "Angelino" calls out to the narrator. "Clear Blue Sky" draws this song collection to a conclusion, with the faith driven *"No matter where life takes you, Even if heaven forsakes you, You can make it through anything, All you really need is a reason why"* and *"Your love comes shining, shining from out of the clear blue sky."*

Meantime, this recording is available on the web from <http://www.kimmierhodes.com> and also from <http://www.texasmusicroundup.com>

Note.

[*] – The Texas Big Bend is that wedge of *far* West Texas bordered in the south by Mexico and on the north by New Mexico.

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood
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