



McGuinn, Hillman & Clark **"The Capitol Collection"** Acadia/Evangeline Records

This 2CD retrospective encompasses a trio of albums recorded by Roger "Jim" McGuinn, Chris Hillman and the late Gene Clark [d. 1991] – for the uninitiated, they are former members of The Byrds - during the period 1979-81. Originally released by Capitol Records, and accompanied here by a quartet of bonus tracks, for the first time ever the albums have been gathered together by the U.K. based independent Acadia label, a subsidiary of Evangeline Records.

As you'll read in the band biography elsewhere on the Folkwax site, the 'reunion' of **"McGuinn, Hillman & Clark"** came about as a direct result of the 'partially completed' European tour that the threesome undertook, each with their, then, road band a couple of years earlier. The trio's debut album and the ensuing **"City"** were recorded in Miami at Criteria Recording Studios and produced by the Albert Brothers, Rick and Howard [aka Howie]. All expectations of a folk-rock [Rickenbacker guitar driven] jangle-fest are dashed by the poppy sounding opener "Long, Long Time" penned by Hillman/Rick Roberts [Flying Burrito Brothers, Firefall]. Clark penned "Little Mamma" on his own, and, according to the liner booklet, his three remaining contributions were co-written. "Feelin' Higher" with Terri Jean Messina, "Release Me Girl" with his buddy [and sometime album producer] Thomas Jefferson Kaye and finally "Backstage Pass" with J. S. Quantrill. And that's where Acadia disagrees with the Capitol album liner, since the latter credited Clark as the sole composer of "Backstage Pass," while it bestowed *'special thanks'* on Quantrill.

Introduced by an infectious guitar riff and featuring a McGuinn lead vocal "Don't You Write Her Off" was the second single taken from the debut album and peaked at # 33 on the U.S. Pop Chart. And that was the sum total of 'significant chart success' as far as this trio was concerned. The song was penned by Roger and his friend/long time collaborator Robert J. Hippard, as was the string drenched, waltz-paced closing cut "Bye Bye Baby" – at the outset the latter melody hints at McGuinn's earlier opus "Chestnut Mare" [which he co-wrote with Jacques Levy]. Hillman's other contributions amount to "Sad Boy" and "Stopping Traffic," the latter co-written with Peter Knobler [at the time Editor of Crawdaddy Magazine]. The cover song on this occasion was "Surrender To Me," penned by guitarist Rick Vito, a member of McGuinn's Thunderbyrds [the latter name was inspired in part by Dylan's mid-seventies Rolling Thunder Revue concert trek in which Roger participated].

When first released the **"City"** liner bore the credit, *McGuinn & Hillman featuring Gene Clark*, the latter having pulled out partway through the recording sessions due to the resurgence of old addictions. As a result Clark only contributed two numbers, the ironically titled "Won't Let You Down" and the rather engaging "Painted Fire." Pretty much another 'pop sounding' set with occasional backward glances to the sound of The Byrds – particularly on the title cut – on this ten-song collection Hillman stepped up to the plate with five credits, all co-writes including "Skate Date" with McGuinn. Once again, that's according to Acadia! The Capitol release credited Hillman/McGuinn and Roger's wife Camilla as the composers of "Skate Date." Camilla and Roger also penned the album title track. The other dubious Acadia credit relates to the uptempo hard-edged rocker "Street Talk" since the label credits Hillman/Clark/Sambataro, while the Capitol release indicated Hillman/Knobler and John Sambataro. Circa 1975 Sambataro became a session guitarist at Criteria and subsequently toured as lead guitarist for McGuinn, Clark & Hillman. The cover song on **"City"** was the Tom Kimmel/Lynn Tobola co-write "She Ain't Givin' Herself Away."

McGuinn and Hillman soldiered on as a duo and their 1981 self-titled release was produced by the legendary Jerry Wexler and Barry Beckett and recorded in Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, Colbert County,

Alabama. Messrs McGuinn and Hillman, together or with others, supplied half the songs, while the [five] covers on this occasion included contributions from, then, *relative new boys*, Rodney Crowell ["Ain't No Money"] and Graham Parker ["Soul Shoes" and "Between You & Me"]. Sadly "**McGuinn Hillman**" proved to be a lacklustre pop/rock and R&B tinged set.

At the outset I mentioned the presence of bonus material. The four cuts include McGuinn/Hillman's "Making Movies," the non-album B Side of the "Turn Your Radio On" single, plus from the trio's first album there's a short version of Vito's "Surrender To Me." Credited in the centre pages of the liner booklet as demos, digitally remastered in 2001, "Little Girl" and "I Love Her" previously surfaced on the July 2001 One Way Records reissue of the trio's first album. This Acadia release includes an eight-page, colour liner booklet featuring three pages of historical notes penned by Alan Robinson. I guess if there are any conclusions to be drawn from the contents of this collection it's that there were occasions when Gene Clark sang like an angel while Roger always was *the voice* of The Byrds. How three studio-experienced musicians allowed the respective record producers to determine musical direction remains the conundrum.

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

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