

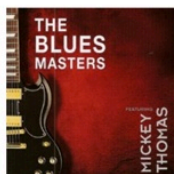
MAVERICK

CD REVIEWS - THE NEW RELEASES

in 1985 as well as giving Elvin Bishop a hit with his 1976 single *Fooled Around And Fell In Love* which is on this album, with Thomas' vocals as soulful and impassioned as they were on the original. A quite exhilarating harmonica solo from Doug Lynn intros the slow blues of *Cherry Red* with Thomas again in amazing voice as he goes from blues growl to his famous falsetto with consummate ease.

Rock Me Baby is just good old-fashioned blues with Lynn again playing some incredible blues harmonica with solid rhythm from drummer Aynsley Dunbar and bass guitarist Danny Miranda. On the Etta James' classic r&b ballad *I'd Rather Go Blind*, Mickey Thomas is just amazing, in fact his voice could melt the most resilient of hearts. Their version of Robert Johnson's 1936 tune *Walkin' Blues* is masterful as John Wedemeyer guests and plays some blistering slide guitar. *Third Degree* is a wonderfully slow blues track that features fantastic solos from guitarist Tim Tucker and organist Ric Ulsky.

Great album that all blues fans should have in their CD collections. **David Knowles**
www.myspace.com/thebluesmasters



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Amanda Shires CARRYING LIGHTNING

Silver Knife Records
 ★★★★★

A gorgeous and glorious string of Pearl's finest...

Listening to Miss Amanda Pearl Shires is a treat that dispenses a double dividend. There's that slight, yet pleasing, vibrato in her voice that has pretty much been essential for a singer since the dawn of Nashville country, and when the lady propels the bow across the strings of her fiddle you know that the sound created will be nothing less than spectacular and melodic. *CARRYING LIGHTNING* was recorded during much of the two years that have elapsed since the appearance of Shires' *WEST CROSS TIMBERS* (2009), and the twenty songs recorded on this go-round were eventually sorted, sieved and reduced to eleven Shires penned originals, plus a cover of Barbara Keith's forty year old *Detroit Or Buffalo*. Here are some thoughts about the contents...

On the intro to *Swimming...* Shires purses her lips...and whistles, and verse-by-verse does so on four further occasions. The album title is referenced in the third verse of this dreamlike creation, while, subjectively, the lyric hints at attraction to a member of the opposite sex, the crucial lines being: 'If I was a flower I would've opened up and bloomed' and the closing: 'Look how easy a heart can catch on fire.' The ensuing *Ghost Bird* is energetically rhythmic, while *When You Need A Train It Never Comes* is underpinned throughout by languorous pedal steel guitar sounds. *Love Be A Bird*, a gently slightly jazzy song about longing, brings to mind Patsy Cline at her peak.

If there were justice in this world the, at times, rambunctious *She Let Go Of Her Kite* would be a chart topping song. 'It was as easy as switching off the light, She watched it as it flew, It felt like the right thing, the right thing to do' describes the principal character's actions and emotions, but in truth they are mere poetic devices, and allude to 'finishing'—it could be a friendship, relationship, marriage, you name it. Without a doubt this song is destined to become an audience favourite, and that goes for the equally addictive *Kudzu* which possesses all the hallmarks of a classic American Songbook ballad. Introduced by Amanda's ukulele the subsequently percussive *Shake The Walls* is a brazen invitation to a passion-filled encounter, while the later *Sloe Gin* sensually portrays contentment—'We're breathing the same air, Breathing the same air at the same time.' *Bees In The Shed* paints a wonderfully rustic portrait, albeit one where danger lurks—'There's no reason to cry, Sure it stings for a minute.' Yeah, so does love lost. The slyly worded *Love Sick I Remain* is self-explanatory by its title, although it could easily twin with *Swimmer...*—'It's the same old sky, It could be so much more with you' and *CARRYING LIGHTNING* closes gently with the fiddle/piano driven instrumental *Swimmer...Dreams Don't Keep*.

Assisting Amanda (fiddle, ukulele, whistling, vocals) on her latest solo endeavour are some familiar figures from its predecessor, namely Rod Picott (acoustic and electric guitars), David Henry (piano, strings, percussion) and Paul Slivka (bass). Adding their weight on this occasion are Chris Scruggs (steel guitar), Neal Casal (acoustic and electric guitars, harmony vocals), Will Kimbrough (electric guitar), Tommy Perkinson (drums, percussion) and more. *CARRYING LIGHTNING* was produced by the same trinity responsible for *WEST CROSS TIMBERS* namely Shires, Picott and Henry. It's another keeper... **Arthur Wood**
http://www.amandashires.net/Amanda_Shires/HOME.html



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