



Various Artists **"Vote In November : Election 2004 Anti Theft Device"** Waterbug Records

#### OR A Scot's View From Across The Atlantic.

I can't recall a single occasion, in some five decades of being a [folk] music fan, when an impending election in the United States of America has raised such genuine, widespread and specifically focused ire among the musical community. Rickie Lee Jones clearly stated her position, last year, with **"The Evening Of My Best Day."** The Creekdippers [aka Mark Olson] delivered their pointed **"Political Manifest"** a few months back [reviewed in Folkwax Issue # 173, July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2004], and Steve Earle recently joined the fray with **"The Revolution Starts....Now."** In further pursuit of asking the American nation to [at least] consider a change of regime on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2004, some compilation recordings including the folk fired **"Hail To The Thief, Vol. II"** have been released. Oregon based Waterbug Records is the source of **"Vote In November,"** also a folk music inspired compilation, that I'll be looking at here.

Numerically speaking – chads aside, if you took an *accurate* headcount - **"Vote In November"** contains fifteen tracks, that boil down to twelve songs, half of which have appeared on previously released albums, two poems and one theatre piece. Apart from the contribution from Lancashire [England's] comic poet and punster Les Barker, I think I'm safe in saying that the other artists featured are all American by birth.

Steve Gillette, ably supported on vocals and accordion by his wife, Cindy Mangsen, opens the proceedings with "The Wumper," a song that praises that beloved minority, the *"1% [\*] of the people with 90% of the wealth."* They've been around for some time and you should, by now, be well acquainted with them and their quaint ways. According to the lyric, many of that elite harbour the aim to *"Buy a couple of senators and a house full of representatives,"* so they can see democracy working for them [and their personal bottom line [#]]! Gillette's throwaway insight, *"The poor they're always with us, don't you know"* adds irony to an already desperate situation, and he closes this subtle condemnation of *misdirected wealth* with *"The rest of you lazy chumps can go get jobs, down at the Wal-Mart."* Get It? Kate McDonnell's "Mercy" is a truly heartfelt anthem for peace in this world, a mindset that includes the positive act of caring for your fellow man. While the lines *"I'm tired of our boy king who wants to play at war"* and *"This war's the newest product wrapped up in cellophane"* indicate Kate's thrust, *"Jesus loved the whole wide world and said go do the same"* finely points the finger at [profit driven] war mongering and professed profound [religious] faith. Across the almost four minute long "Bush Must Be Defeated," Dan Bern repeats the song title some three dozen times. Folk mantra! In the second verse Bern adds the rhyme *"His evil gang unseated, His base of power deleted, His energy depleted,"* and pursues similar repetition through the succeeding quintet of verses, employing such words as *"unneeded, weeded, cheated and excreted."* The, spoken, closing line *"Bush must be defeated, with joy in your heart"* remains open to interpretation.....or do they?

George William Frederick Hanover [1738 - 1820] aka "King George III," reigned over the United Kingdom for sixty years, during which time [due to, let's call it, *mismanagement*] he lost *the colonies* – those colonies became *these here* United States of America. Now I'm not saying that Hugh Blumenfeld is *even* hinting that history could repeat itself. I'm not even thinking out loud that the world's most powerful nation could be brought to its knees by over-commitment of resources and a repetition of the events of late October 1929 - but it's a possibility! Has history ever repeated itself? Surely government's become more sophisticated and informed following each faux pas – major or minor! Not.

Jonathan Byrd and Dromedary performed "You Better Keep Your Eye On Him" during the main Kerrville Folk Festival this year. While no specific name is mentioned, doubt as to Byrd's intended target amounts to less than 1%. The poem "The Civilised World" from Les Barker is verbally wicked [full of understated delivery – Barker intones *"beating the crap out of everybody, never occurred to me"*], but subjectively *right on the money* nonetheless, as is the seven minute long Anne Feeney/Chris Chandler theatrical, music with narrative, piece "Carnivals # 3."

"Born A Thousand Times" from Sons Of The Never Wrong adopts the theme of constancy of heart and mind when faced with the loss of loved ones [in a needless war], while Jack Hardy's [+] verbally historical/hysterical "In Bed With The Enemy" opens with the razor sharp *"It's hard to rattle your sabre [when you're in bed with the enemy]"* and in over four minutes delivers a plethora of political/first familial insights. "Dangerous Times," a survey of life in the land of the free circa 2004, hails from Chuck Brodsky's classic disc **"Color Came One Day"** [reviewed in Folkwax Issue # 172, July 15<sup>th</sup> 2004], while "Two Kids" by 2003 Kerrville New Folk winner Anais Mitchell, contrasts the present day life of a young person in the U.S.A. and another in Iraq. Andrew Calhoun, the creator of **"Vote In November"** reads [with audible passion] the poem, "Short Ode" penned by American author and poet Stephen Vincent Benet [1898 - 1943], and closes with the summation *"It was their thought that they did well, And yet there are still the tyrants and the kings."* Although, subjectively, the poem refers to World War 1, the historic parallels mentioned therein click into place like the tumblers on a safe that will be cracked. Adopting a religious approach lyrically, Michael Troy's "The Thief" hails from his 2004 sophomore album **"Romancing The Moon,"** and, fittingly, the collection closes with the low key "Filled With Love" from Portsmouth, New Hampshire based performer Joyce Andersen.

As this election campaign draws to a close – are any genuine issues being discussed? - I have to wonder if the ultimate [to date] *corporate military industrial complex* dares allow the present incumbent of 1600 Pennsylvania to fail in the 2004 presidential election, since it will also lose heavily, financially and otherwise. In late September 2004 as I view the United States from the United Kingdom, it doesn't take a person of significant IQ to conclude that the first president to serve a full term in the twenty-first century AD [aided by his cronies] has isolated the nation from the remainder of the world [possibly for decades], and also reversed hard won freedoms within that country's own borders. Irrespective of the outcome of the 2004 election, I have to say that this collection of songs will remain a vital and valid testament to these troubled times. If the latter can be deemed *one positive result*, then I heartily congratulate Andrew Calhoun for his foresight and skill in assembling this collection.

Let me, in closing, quote one of Tom Pacheco's yet to be recorded songs "Not In My Name" - *"The Liberty Bell says it each time it rings, You're president sir, you're not king."* In this current turmoil, Iraq is one four-letter word that comes to mind. I'm sure there are others! God speed the American nation on 11/02/2004 - **"Vote In November"** .....and I pray you vote well.

To purchase one copy of this CD all it takes is \$5.00. For further details go to <http://www.waterbug.com/antitheft.html> .....Now!

#### **Note.**

[\*] – "1%" being pronounced as *"wumper cent"*

[#] – Having been a *going concern* for thirty years, New York's music mecca, The Bottom Line closed during G. W. Bush's presidency.

[+] – Jack lost his beloved brother, bass man and chef, Jeff, on 9/11.

Folkwax Rating 8 out of 10

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 09/04