



The Kennedys “**Half A Million Miles**” Appleseed Recordings

On October 22nd last year Pete and Maura celebrated ten years of marriage, a period during which they have been practically inseparable and have performed over one thousand duo gigs. Currently on their fourth tour van, following a calamitous accident on the New Jersey Turnpike last fall, the album “**Half A Million Miles**” celebrates the road miles that these road warriors have clocked up in the last decade. To date this duo has released/reissued their seven previous recordings on five labels, and “**Half A Million Miles**” marks their arrival at their sixth imprint, the radical Appleseed Recordings.

I lost touch with this duo back in the late nineteen-nineties following the appearance of their third set “**Angel Fire.**” My recollection is that they always seemed to be high on a mix of Rickenbacker sounding guitar jangle and folk/pop styled songs, and on this celebration of their first decade together nothing appears to have changed. The opening song, and album title recalls in detail their first meeting at the Continental Club in June 1992, and their shared experiences in the following hours and days. These days The Kennedys are residents of New York’s East Village and the term “Namaste” [it means “*the divine in me recognises the divine in you*”] and “domo arrigato” [“*thank you*”] are, respectively, the oft-heard greeting and offer of thanks at their favourite local sushi bar. The highly rhythmic title “Midnight Ghost” is taken from the name of the freight train that Jack Kerouac hopped from Los Angeles to San Francisco in the opening chapter of his novel “**Dharma Bums.**” In terms of feel, rhythm and sound, the intro to “Live” is straight out of The Band Songbook and partway through there’s also shades of the melody to Dino Valente’s “Get Together.” Subjectively, the Kennedy’s lyric is an invocation to live life well and to the full. Pete Kennedy picks some wonderfully fluid and cyclical rippling guitar chords during “Listen.”

A sitar launches “Nuah,” the tale of a mythical Samarian female goddess, while a sophisticated Latin styled melody drives “9th Street Billy,” the tale of an East Village fabric store-owner who “*dispenses wisdom, gratis.*” To find the lineage of “Everything’s On Fire” you’d have to be familiar with songs that rose and fell on the transatlantic pop charts of the late nineteen-fifties/early sixties, and each of the six verses here opens with “*Buddha said....*” leading to the liner note comment “*We call this genre Buddha Holly.*” The segue of Richard Thompson’s “How Will I Ever Be Simple Again?” and Bob Dylan’s “Chimes Of Freedom” amount to the only cover tunes among ten Pete and Maura originals. Among a million reasons why they covered these tunes, Pete Kennedy is a self-confessed Byrds fanatic – that band included a stunning cover of “Chimes” on their debut album “**Mr Tambourine Man,**” while Maura’s first band was the Syracuse based Fairport Convention clones, Sparse Frontiers – Thompson’s “How” appeared on the Brit’s 1986 album “**Daring Adventures.**” Where the latter cut is given an Irish feel, their template for “Chimes” was obviously one bred on the West Coast four decades back.

If the inspiration for “**Half A Million Miles**” is retaining a sense of time and place, living life well, and the effect of the latter on personal memory, the closing pair “Time Ain’t Long” and “Here And Now” deeply mine those avenues. “Here And Now” opens with Pete reciting an adaptation of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essay “**Self Reliance.**”

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

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