



Steve Young **“Stories Round The Horseshoe Bend”** Starry Pyramid Records

“Stories Round The Horseshoe Bend” features Young in a stripped bare voice and acoustic guitar performance and was recorded at the ‘cavernous sounding’ [+] Pioneer Pavilion, Mill Creek Park in Youngstown, Ohio on 4th November 2006.

Twelve of the fifteen songs are prefaced by spoken introductions, as Steve undertakes a ‘musical journey’ from his early years to the present day. As for the source of the material performed, there are seven Young penned originals, the remainder being traditional numbers and contemporary covers. During his teen years, Steve [b. 1942] would have been familiar with many of the latter. Having attested to the influence of ‘mostly’ black street musicians he witnessed while growing up in the south – Young was born in Georgia and also spent his early years in Alabama and Texas – he opens with “Ragtime Blue Guitar” and follows with his arrangement of “Little Birdie.” Subjectively Billy Ed Wheeler’s “Coal Tattoo” reflects on the hardships of an Appalachian coalminer’s life, while Young prefates his bluesy “White Trash Song” with *“This is a song I wrote a long time ago about some cousins I had that lived way down on the back roads of Georgia. They got in all kinds of trouble, and used to call themselves ‘white trash’ as a joke, but really they were. I wrote this song to celebrate them.”* Circa 1986, John D. Loudermilk’s “Tobacco Road” was a minor country music hit for Roy Clark. Two decades earlier it was much favoured by blues influenced, British beat combos and the ‘intriguingly named’ Nashville Teens – a band that hailed from Southern England - took it to # 14 on the U.S. Pop Chart in 1964 [and eight places higher in the equivalent U.K. chart]. Steve rendition of this blues inflected number can best be described as slow and greasy.

A live rendition of Steve’s “Seven Bridges Road” recorded by The Eagles at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium charted for that band during 1981, and the writer follows his slow and soulful rendition of this classic – *““Seven Bridges Road” is probably the same as “Tobacco Road,” just seen in a better mood”* - with “Silverlake” – the latter, his tribute to a now ‘gentrified’ area of Los Angeles where Steve has resided *“off and on.”* The latter number first surfaced on Young’s **“Switchblades Of Love”** [1993]. Steve’s “Lonesome, On’ry & Mean” opened the late Waylon Jennings’ 1974 album of the same name, and the recording went on to peak at # 8 on the U.S. Country Album Chart thereby reinforcing the Littlefield, Texas born musician’s ‘outlaw’ persona. “Ballad Of William Sycamore” is credited to Young and Stephen Vincent Benet. However they never met, since Benet, an American author, poet and novelist spun off this mortal plane during 1943, when Steve was barely one year old. Setting the music to Benet’s 1922 poem, Steve used over half of the original nineteen verses.

Raised in the fundamentalist Baptist church, during his adult years Young has studied numerous global faiths including those of the Native American nations and his “Peyote Chant” hails from that source. Retaining a Native American theme, the ensuing “Coyote My Little Brother” was penned by the late Peter LaFarge [d. 1965], a fixture on the Greenwich Village club scene during the great folk music scare of the early nineteen sixties. Texas bred singer/songwriter Richard Dobson, a Swiss resident these many years, penned “A Useful Girl.” Supported by his band State Of The Heart, Dobson’s version surfaced two decades ago on **“Live At The Station Inn 3/23/88.”** The “useful girl” is Native American, her skill being that of a seamstress. “I’m A One Woman Man” was co-penned by singer Johnny Horton and Tillman Franks. Horton took this rockabilly style number to # 7 on the U.S. Country Chart back in 1956 – Young was aged fourteen years at the time – and here, Steve delivers a suitably energetic rendition. Young closes his performance with two traditional numbers, the bluesy “Hoboin” and the rhythmic Appalachian folk song “East Virginia.”

Note.

[+] – Particularly when the audience is applauding Young.

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 12/08.