



Wyckham Porteous **"3AM"** Cordova Bay Records

Through the closing decade of the twentieth century I will admit to having experienced a sneaking affection for the Penta, Arpeggio, Bohemia Beat and Ragged Pup released recordings – one album per label - by Vancouver Island bred Porteous. Come the new millennium, his debut outing for Cordova Bay **"sexanddrinking"** changed all that. Think of the bird we stuff and consume for Christmas lunch! On that occasion, including two co-writes, Wyckham had a hand in penning all the material. Six years have flown past and he's back with an Andrew Loog Oldham produced sophomore Cordova Bay released effort, composed of six Porteous originals and four cover songs. If you survived the sixties then you needed no introduction to Mr. Oldham.....

Oldham was on the cusp of finding fame as a producer/artist manager when The Beatles took Lennon & McCartney's "Please, Please Me" to # 2 U.K. Pop during early 1963. Oldham was hired by the late Brian Epstein [Beatles manager] to promote the single, and soon afterwards The Rolling Stones crossed Andrew's path. Although it was concurrently issued in the States "Please, Please Me" failed to chart. Reissued in the Spring of the following year it peaked at # 3 U.S. Pop. Supported principally by John Ellis' pedal steel, with a mid track soupcon of sitar [peace, man], Porteous' approaches this forty year plus old song as a ballad. Depressing the brake pedal, in Wyckham's hands, Springsteen's "Hungry Heart" a # 5 U. S. Pop single, circa 1980, is similarly given the ballad treatment. With music by Gene De Paul and a Sammy Cahn lyric, the Vancouver islander dons a tuxedo for a silky smooth rendition of "Teach Me Tonight," an easy listening standard that dates from 1953. The fourth and final cover, penned by Jerry Leiber [of the hit songwriting partnership, Leiber & Stoller] and Phil Spector, is "Spanish Harlem." The song gave Ben E. King his first post Drifters hit song reaching # 10 U.S. Pop during 1961, and Wyckham's rendition which closes **"3AM"** is a wistful sounding delight, led by a finger-picked acoustic guitar and supported by an accordion.

On **"3AM"** the foregoing foursome is sprinkled amongst the Porteous' penned originals, so let's take a look at what he has to say for himself on this occasion. Set to a gently loping rhythm, Porteous' album opener "Deep Into The Water" finds the Canadian deliberately reach for reality with *"Salt upon my wound makes me know I am alive"* and then conclude regarding our currently screwed up world, *"It's the fear and the idle boast we are praising."* Irrespective of *"Journey path, religious quest or passing through"* in the second cut the narrator praises simply *"being alive"* and attests "I Will Follow." Located at the junction of the Potomac and Shenandoah river, Porteous' narrator in "Harper's Ferry" recalls how in the midst of horrifying carnage *"It was then that I saw you, sweet Mary O'Hanley, You'd come to these hills from the hills back in Ireland, Sweet Mary, oh Mary will you run with me, home where the ghosts can set us all free."*

Released in the UK as a single "Please, Please Me" was teamed with Wyckham's "Ancient Highway," wherein the restless main character, William, deserts his wife and offspring and takes off for the endless horizon to the tune [and justification!] of *"No one in my family been down that way before."* Unmixed? - there's a three second long segment 2mins. 50 sec. into this track where the tone of Wyckham's voice clearly alters! Shrouded in lyrical generalities, but wrapped in a beautiful acoustic guitar led melody, the voice we hear in "Beggar's Harbour" could be William's. Times zones are referenced in the love song **"3AM"** – *"Missing me, missing you more every day"* - while at the outset of the penultimate "Young Man Walking" my initial reaction was, is Wyckham imitating Lenny? Cohen that is. Accompanied by a banjo, and sounding vocally gruff at the outset, Porteous' lyric is, well, rather obtuse. Poetically speaking there's

blood on the young man's hands, and while bombs explode around him the narrator concludes, *"I used to think love and heat were different, but I know they are both the same."* Duh!

Relative to **"sexanddrinking,"** the sixties sounding **"3AM"** is a distinct improvement, but hardly a revelation relative to Wyckham's nineteen-nineties musical outings.

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 07/07.