



James Keelaghan **“Home”** Appleseed Recordings

If you want a quick synopsis, then I'd say that **“Home”** carries on from where Keelaghan's **“Road”** left off at the close of last century. What I mean is that **“Home”** marries Keelaghan's career long affection for creating story songs that are underpinned by historical fact, with examples of his more recent stylistic development - song lyrics that possess a refreshingly personal perspective. In addition, James has never shied away from covering songs that he considered valuable contributions to the art. On **“Home,”** the latter amount to the opener, David Francey's "Red Winged Blackbird," while "Woodsmoke And Oranges" from Ian Tamblyn focuses on man's battle with the forces of nature while in search of adventure and testing new experiences. Francey was born in Scotland and his family immigrated to Canada when he was eleven. Tamblyn, on the other hand, is a Canadian bred songwriting legend. Set in the early decades of the eighteenth century, a night of poaching on Squire Donhill's Park goes wrong resulting in *transportation* from England to Van Diemen's Land [now Tasmanian] in the traditional "Henry's Down Fall." The other item of traditional fare, "The Flower of Magherally," is a love story set in County Down, Ireland – and somewhat oddly for the genre - closes with the narrator expressing optimism for the future.

The remaining half dozen songs are all Keelaghan originals. "Sinatra And I" is a engaging tale of a road weary traveller and the bond that develops with a dog, *"face like a bandit and icy blue eyes,"* that he adopts and christens Sinatra. That they can both fend for themselves, tellingly comes across in the lines *"I'd ask him to sit but he'd pay me no mind"* and *"He'll do it his way and I'll do it mine."* "October 70" recalls the 1970 kidnapping of British Trade Commissioner, James Richard Cross, from his Montreal home by a cell of the Front for the Liberation of Quebec. Keelaghan, a 10-year old paperboy in Calgary, Alberta at the time, observed the events unfold in print, while in his lyric he cleverly introduces a similarly aged counterpart in Joliette, Quebec who witnesses the events, of what became known as the October Crisis, unfold right before his eyes. When the Canadian Parliament Building burned down in 1916, the nation's young were engaged in fighting a war on another continent. Culminating in the topping off of the Peace Tower in 1921, "Stonecutter" recalls the reconstruction of the building with *"no man under thirty"* since *"The fields of France had swallowed the apprentice lads."* "Nothing" is James' *"no holds barred"* summation of the *"poser and his pose"* in current day politics and the media, while "Sing My Heart Home" and the closing "You Know Me" are, respectively, highly personal expositions of longing and love. *Home is where the heart lies they say.....*I'd say that **“Home”** may be Keelaghan's finest hour.....

Folkwax Rating 8 out of 10

Arthur Wood
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