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KATE McDONNELL

Next Waterbug WBG 0038

Once you've released at least one album, the application of pure logic suggests that you should call the follow up *Next*. Eventually, someone had to. The evidence here suggests that the tuneful folk foundation McDonnell currently works from, was born of a youth that enjoyed regular injections as well as the inflections of real pop music. That is, those, long gone, golden decades when pop possessed a melody. Kate's lead and dubbed supporting harmony vocals on the thirteen self-produced cuts that compose *Next* furnish an abundance of examples of putting those influences into practice.

Using Martin and Taylor guitars, Kate's skill with the six stringed beast is awesome. The loose stringed sound that accompanies the upbeat melody of *Tangerine Shirt* is adequate proof of that assessment. As for a sense of humour, McDonnell's rises to the surface in her ode to the joys of home maintenance, *Don't Fix My Faucet*. *Enola Gay* recalls an unfortunately named school bully, while drawing cross references to the events in Hiroshima of August 6th 1945. In the liner notes, Kate confirms that the foregoing trio of compositions (and others in this collection) are autobiographical in terms of their inspiration and content.

Five years young, Waterbug has proved to be one of America's most consistent independent labels in terms of the quality of its releases. McDonnell's album is another fine addition to a catalogue that is truly one America's best kept secrets. For how much longer ? Available in the UK from ADA or Waterbug UK, 2 Woodhouse, Shilbottle, Northumberland NE66 2HR.

Arthur Wood

KATE CAMPBELL

Visions Of Plenty Demon FIENDCD 943

Blessed by countless press laurels for her first pair of albums, *Songs From The Levee* and *Moonpie Dreams*, and with a number of UK public appearances already under her belt, the question arises – Will this album see Kate Campbell's career rocket skyward in terms of mass public acceptance and awareness ?

Supported as always by her long time writing partners Johnny Pierce and husband Ira, they provide six of the eleven tracks on this collection. On the remaining handful of songs, Kate has collaborated with 1992 Kerrville New Folk contest winner, Tricia Walker, Kevin Gordon, the intriguingly named Kenya Slaughter Walker and Mark Narmore.

As for the content, there's a return to already familiar subjects from Campbell's childhood such as civil rights and bussing (*Crazy In Alabama* and *Bus 109*). *Bowl-A-Rama* recounts a local ten pin hero who almost made the big time with PBA, while the humour in *Jesus And Tomatoes* relates to a miraculously large crop of red spheres. Attaining fame after they were featured on the evening news, masses of visitors came from afar and they were eventually captured for posterity on commemorative T-shirts. Purely tongue in cheek, Campbell adds a touch of modern day technology to the whole affair, with the comment that those tomatoes even had their own web site.

Kate's reveals a common sense attitude toward the clothes she wears in *Suit Yourself*. A perfect anti-Clothes Show anthem. *Fearlessly*, *Sing Me Out* and *Funeral Food* visit the taboo subject of death. Pride of place however goes to the opening, album title cut and Tricia Walker collaboration. *Visions Of Plenty* is stamped by a distinctive harmony vocal from Emmylou Harris (she also turns up on *Crazy In Alabama*), while the narrator tells of her elusive dream to own a piece of land.

The answer to the conundrum I posed at the end of the opening paragraph is in your hands and pocket. Hesitation can be construed as a crime.

Arthur Wood.

Steve & Kristi Nebel *Birds Of Winter* (Icebird IBCD9701) Well meaning, environmentally conscious, love infested songs and character portraits. At best, floor spot folk. At worst – you don't want to know ! Available from that really cool label, Icebird Records, P.O. Box 5764, Tacoma, WA 98415-0764, U.S.A.

☛ **Nitty Gritty Dirt Band *Will The Circle Be Unbroken Vol. 2*** (Beat Goes On BGOCD400) If you didn't catch it first time around, a decade or so back, here's another opportunity to get the Nitty Gritty's star-studded, 20 track, double disc follow-up to their 1972, triple disc, tribute to the country genre. Captured here in its entirety on one small silver circle of plastic.