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CD REVIEWS THE NEW RELEASES

Chuck Brodsky SUBTOTAL ECLIPSE

ChuckBrodsky.com Records

★★★★

Here's another story rich and subjectively varied collection from this Asheville-based musician

What's an almost guaranteed certainty with a Chuck Brodsky song collection is that boy/girl themed songs are going to be minimal. On SUBTOTAL ECLIPSE recorded in the Nova Scotia home studio of J. P. Cormier (six and twelve-string guitars, banjo, mandolin, fiddle, bass, keyboards, percussion, harmony vocals), there's nary an obvious example of 'moon' 'spoon' and 'June.' One of my songwriting heroes, Steve Gillette, recently claimed they 'are all love songs,' so I guess it's down to interpretation of that well-worn four-letter word. Brodsky launches his tenth solo release with the green-themed *Out Of Time And Place*, wherein the main protagonist has achieved the (seemingly) impossible by purposely avoiding consumerism, be it possession of the toys of modern technology, keeping pace with fashion or the idle worship of celebrity. People take note...

Brodsky's love of bat, ball and the diamond, manifests itself here in three of the one-dozen selections. *Roberto* recalls the late 1972 death of Pittsburgh Pirates star Roberto Clemente. During each off-season Clemente spent much of his time carrying out humanitarian work. When an earthquake struck Nicaragua on 23 December 23, 1972, he organised four plane loads of emergency aid. Discovering that three planes had been intercepted by the corrupt Somoza government, he decided to accompany the fourth. The aircraft was old and faulty, the pilot unlicensed and the payload unsecured, and consequently it crashed into the sea soon after take-off. *The Bellyache Heard Around The World* recalls the Babe Ruth's health problems during 1925 Spring Training, while the melodically bright and breezy *The Phenom*—he's a talented teenage pitcher, as yet untested in the show—focuses on the frankly ludicrous sums of money expended in 21st century sport on the mere premise that 'maybe one day he'll make us rich.'

Replete with a Celtic sounding, mid-tune instrumental break by Cormier, from a slightly different angle *The World As You Once Knew It* pursues the underlying theme of the opening song. A deal of wry humour is woven into the verses of *That Guy*, while the ensuing *Same Dress Twice*, subjectively, reflects upon how the current financial crisis has had truly calamitous repercussions on excessively rich folks: 'She must be counting her nickels and her dimes' and 'Even castle dwellers feel the squeeze.' *William Henry Paddle* is an energetic hoedown, while *Lili's Braids* was a new song when it turned up on Chuck's preceding (live) release *TWO SETS*—now comes the studio rendition of this truly heartbreaking tale. The latter recalls the holocaust, as does the intriguingly worded *Gerta*. The penultimate and up tempo *People Up Here* takes as its focus an isolated haven—"It's the end of the Earth, it's the furthest spot." Brodsky closes SUBTOTAL ECLIPSE with *I Tried Fitting In*. Therein, the narrator reflects upon the instances in his life, so far, when he's been 'a round peg in a square hole.'

Arthur Wood

<http://www.chuckbrodsky.com/music.html>



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