



Keith Greeninger “**Glorious Peasant**” Wind River Music

The photographs that adorn the “**Glorious Peasant**” liner, shot at the setting of the evening sun, portray Keith and his wife, son and daughter in silhouette. In the one shot Keith stands alone, holding an acoustic guitar in one hand, while grasped in the other, and slung over his shoulder, is a shovel and rake - tools with which man has for eons tilled and cultivated the soil of planet Earth. Long before agriculture became a machine and corporate profit driven industry, families survived for centuries cultivating their small patch of land. Here at the dawn of the 21st millennium, you **can** survive without embracing the ills of ‘modern society’ and that is precisely how Greeninger has chosen to live. Just check out the album title cut for evidence.....more of which later.

Five years on from “**Back To You**,” his sophomore solo release, Greeninger has obviously spent the time between communicating with Mother Earth, as evidenced by this, eleven selection, melodically soulful union of folk/country/blues/jazz licks, coupled to lyrics that reflect, personally and globally, on these times. Except, that is, for the instrumental “Honey Dripping” which is cleverly positioned [precisely] midway through “**Glorious Peasant**.” Finger-picked on an acoustic guitar this soothing and gently reflective piece, allows the listener to draw breath relative to what has gone before and what is yet to come.

Last time out of the starting gate Keith was supported by Dayan Kai’s band Water, and the constants on this new collection amount to co-production assistance from Tim Prince – he has worked on all Keith’s solo releases, plus Dayan Kai [flute, sax, clarinet, percussion] and Jim Norris [drums]. Other contributors include Roger Feuer [acoustic lead guitar], Keith’s former partner in the San Francisco based, nineteen-nineties trio, City Folk.

Listen to the words of the opening cut “All Who Have” and at the close you may well find yourself asking ‘*what about those who now have not?*’ Having delivered the telling “*The ordained slaughter of the innocent, And the tattered veils of liberty*” and “*When freedom drops from your clear blue sky, And blows apart a million lives, Do you count your blessings, Do you count your dead, Do you find any comfort, In what you prophet said,*” while there is no direct citing of the place or date and time, we know precisely where Keith is directing our eyes. Towards the close there’s a spoken coda “*Dictators and presidents, Secretaries of defence and state, Diplomats and bureaucrats, Ministers of fear and hate,*” following which Keith nails the whole sorry affair with the subtly worded couplet, “*For the crude promise, And the dollar sign.*” If the opening cut establishes Greeninger’s stance on recent adventures abroad, then, in a way, he views it from other directions on the ensuing trio of cuts. That repetition, in no way dilutes the individuality of each song. ‘Love conquers all’ may be the maxim – and solution - that underpins “Harder That We Love,” but rather than being a person-to-person observation its intention is global. At one point Greeninger reflects on people “*Peering out a thousand shattered windows, Gazing toward a clear heart broken sky,*” then adds “*Somewhere there’s a place where an innocent wind still blows.*” While healing, on a planet wide scale, may be Greeninger’s ultimate goal, the lyric also alludes to “*tears*” and “*hawks and doves,*” and those “*tears*” reappear in “Arsenal Of Doves” as does “*love,*” as well as the image of “*crosses made of wood,*” a reference to “*seeds of war,*” and the comment “*Let the kings hoard all their money, People, their money is no good.*” Observed by his enemies, the initial image may be that of a man [a soldier?] laying “*His weapons down,*” but the main characters here are a man and woman, both, seemingly Devine. He, a warrior “*No blood upon his sword and shield, No hatred in his tear filled eyes,*” while she, of the “Arsenal Of Doves,” serves as a mother to everyone. “Breaking Through” is launched by a reference to “*prophets and saviours,*” or in other words the “*Fools who want to rule the promise*

land." Maintaining this chain of word links "*weapons*" and "*love*" reappear in "Breaking Through," as does the allusion to a mother figure "*Mama spread your arms around, The helpless and weary, Give them the strength to hold on to what's true.*" Ruminating on the troubled times we now live in, the lyric ultimately questions whether there is a "*heaven*" or even a "*hell*." The opening half of "**Glorious Peasant**" reaches a climax with, "Something Worth Keeping," a joyous tribute to precious friendships and heartfelt [final] partings. Hold up there a minute however, did Keith just sing "*The dark eyed prophet smiles in his sleep*"? By golly he did, and not only that "*Momma*" and "*tear*" reappear in the lyric, but the essence of this heartfelt tribute amounts to "*The spirit shines out beyond the body's cages, The sweetest scriptures ain't written on no pages.*" Amen to that.

Where Keith's focus in the opening segment of "**Glorious Peasant**" amounts to a comment on politics, corporate and government driven, the second segment sees an occasionally personal focus in play. In Keith Greeninger's world, consumerism has been discarded for a lifestyle where spirituality, honesty and truth are the revered touchstones. "Shelter Of Your Heaven" is a melodically slow yet sensual love song, undoubtedly penned for his wife Susan, while, in "Rainbow," which follows, the down-at-heel narrator admits "*Morning light always found me, In the devils neighbourhood,*" expresses a wish to embrace the listener "*just one last time*" and holds out the promise "*Someday I'm gonna show you, Gonna show you my best.*" A good-time sounding brass and percussion driven workout, "Take You To The Mountain," features backing vocals from Dayan, Tamala Brown, Michael Carpenter and Buzz Sulgit. I mentioned the album title cut at the outset, and the lyric is probably the most personal one [relative to Keith] here. Of course it's a tender love song, it's also an articulation of Keith's lifestyle, but mostly it's the brightest of many gems in this collection. In summing up this life – his glorious life – as the track closes Greeninger delivers the uplifting, nay anthemic summation "*These are my people, this is my tribe, We are a ragged band of gypsies, With a flame that burns inside, These are our children, this our home, We put our hands upon this earth, And then we bring the harvest home.*" The gentle paced "Immediately Blessed" lays "**Glorious Peasant**" to rest, and while I, deliberately, have not dwelt upon the song-by-song repetition of words in the second segment of this album, addressed to "*my sister Kate,*" "Immediately Blessed" contains this poetic, yet sublime, expression of connectedness "*We are peasants proud and plain, With this hunger in our blood, Blessed by sunlight and by train, We dance in the rivers flood.*"

If you allow the words and music on "**Glorious Peasant**" to seep gradually into your life, you won't regret the effort you expend or the wonderful journey that Keith Greeninger takes you on.....

Folkwax Score 9 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 07/06.