



Joe Crookston – GEORGIA I'M HERE (Album Review) Milagrito Records

Spiritually inflected, GEORGIA I'M HERE delivers coherent and crystal clear snapshots from life's journey.

Spanning the period November 2013/March 2014, the self-produced/self-released GEORGIA I'M HERE, Crookston's fourth full studio album (and fifth release), was recorded at Electric Wilburland in Newfield, N.Y. Crookston (vocals, guitar, violin, banjo, piano, dobro, slide guitar) was joined in the studio by regular sideman Peter Glanville (tenor/electric guitar), plus Noah VanNordstrand (mandolin), Jason Rafalak (electric/upright bass), Nate Richardson (kora), Jimmy Hefferman (pedal steel), Chris White (cello) and Dana Billings (piano, drums, percussion) while there are harmony vocals from Kathryn Caldwell, Jen Middaugh and RJ Cowdery.

A number of songs titles listed on the rear of the card gatefold cover, and in the eight-page liner booklet, include a bracketed postscript – it could be a description, sub-title, dedication or a reference point. In the case of the assertive and inspirational opening song *Georgia I'm Here* it's *The Invocation*. *The Dream Mix* references the ensuing *Riding The Train*, a paean to humankind as they daily “*bumble and plod*.” One of a pair of cover songs here, *Impermanent Things* was penned by Minnesota bred solo singer/songwriter Peter Himmelman. Similar in context to *Riding The Train*, Himmelman's lyric mirrors our earthly existence. Bearing the dedication *For Roko* and set in Manhattan's skyscraper canyons on a “*clear blue sky*” *Tuesday Morning*, perched in a cradle on the 42nd floor, Maria's father cleans windows. We learn that this bird's eye – as well as, seemingly, a philosopher's - view of the world has been his lot in life for nineteen years. As for his daughter, she believes he's Superman.

Morning is breaking at the outset of *Big Sky (In The Middle Of Nowhere)* as the Empire Builder rolls west across North Dakota rails. Heading for a “*brand new start*” and harbouring “*a broken heart*,” by chance, the narrator encounters and learns much about ‘life’ having conversed with the newly widowed, older Rose Marie. Personal uncertainty and yearning “*for you*” sit centre-stage in *Miner In The Mourning*, while in *Black Dress (I'm In Love With A Woman)* adoration from a distance is followed by the up-close-and-personal assertion “*I'm still glad that I married you*.” Possessing an alternate lyric, the longer, second version of *Riding The Train* is sub-titled *The Meter Maid Mix*.

A Crookston arrangement of *Pretty Saro*, the early 18th century English traditional folk ballad that was subsequently transplanted to the Appalachians, is the second cover song. Having made its debut on Joe's 2004 album of the same name, in pursuit of the tenets of the folk process, there's a GEORGIA I'M HERE update for *Fall Down As The Rain*. In his examination of a mystery – reincarnation - Joe asserts “*...if I get to heaven, I will not stay*” and, moving on, suggests forms for his earthly return. The penultimate song *Out On The Run*, a heartfelt exposition of the ages of man – “*In the morning then twilight then gone*” - bears the dedication *For Josie Rae*. A one-minute reprise of *Georgia I'm Here*, bearing the postscript *Amen*, brings the latest collection of well-crafted Joe Crookston songs gently to a close.

<http://joecrookston.com/> and <https://myspace.com/joecrookston/music/songs>

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