



John Coinman **"Songs From The Modern West"** Corazong Records

Based on the press release, and the album title, there was a degree of anticipation that Tucson, Arizona based Coinman's **"Songs From The Modern West"** was going to be a precious Americana gem. I should state from the outset that I'm far from familiar with his oeuvre, yet Coinman is one of a handful of American roots writers whose recordings are released with some regularity in Europe. It's also true to say that his music is lauded there, probably more so than in the land of his birth. In that regard he's not unlike American song poet [and near neighbour] Chris Burroughs [also from Tucson], Seattle's Terry Lee Hale [Hale actually uses France as his base for part of the year] and Philadelphia's Joseph Parsons, all of whom annually perform to acclaim in Europe. Hell, even David Munyon from Midland City, Alabama who we recently featured in Folkwax fits comfortably into the latter, somewhat exclusive, club.

Coinman's name is appended to the writing credit of each of the ten cuts. Album producer Teddy Morgan helped out in three instances, a pair of songs were co-penned with his bassist/buddy Blair Forward, one was created with Nashville based pop/folk singer Amy Rigby, and finally, there's a three way co-write featuring singer and long time writing collaborator James Intveld and Mike Turner. Morgan performed "Bell" on the Fred Eaglesmith tribute album **"The Songs Of..."** a few years back, so maybe we can assume that these guys possess genuine roots music credentials.

As the *hard times* themed opening cut "Once This Was The Promised Land" attests, decades pass and the way people choose to live their lives alters....and not always for the common good! For instance, in the third verse Coinman's narrator paints the modern day *"Dog is in the driveway looking mighty good, I wouldn't eat him but my neighbour would,"* and then offers a remembrance of the good old days with *"Grandma's in the backyard with a rattlesnake in her hand."* Recollections of better times and feeling worthless in the 21<sup>st</sup> century corporate world underpin the later "Days Like These." Although the words "veteran" or "soldier" don't featured in the lyric of "The Hero" – *"I'm the hero and I'm back from hell,"* that's precisely Coinman's focus in this Teddy Morgan co-write.

"Long Hot Night" is a road [and railroad] song with some partial love interest, "By The "U" In Buick" can be summed up as the musings of a narrator *"Who never got off his butt and left town like he should have done, while other friends did."* "Down In Nogales" isn't set to a Tex-Mex beat, but the opening line mentions a *"Spanish melody"* drifting down the street. An element love interest pervades the former cut, and also threads its way through the run of the mill up-tempo number "Find That Girl," as well as "Every Intention" and the lyrically precious closer "Never Losing You." **"Songs From The Modern West"** is a marriage of *up* and *down*, and in the latter mode Coinman came cross as creatively caught in a slough. Wish I could say that my first contact with John Coinman's brand of electric roots rock was contrary to ordinary. Sadly, it wasn't.....

This recording is currently available in Europe from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) and it will be released by Corazong USA in late June.

Folkwax Rating 6 out of 10

Arthur Wood  
Kerrville Kronikles 04/05