



Rod MacDonald **"This One"** Brambus Records

A sixteen song collection of old and new material, **"This One"** was produced by J. P. Bowersock, a member of Ryan Adam's band The Cardinals during the period 2004-2005. "Opening Disclaimer" launches **"This One,"** wherein, as has been the hallmark of his writing career, MacDonald pulls no punches regarding public and private life in current times. Here's a soupcon – *"The politician says the budget was unable to be balanced, Justice failed to be observed, mass weapons were undetected, The environment was unconcerned, the votes were not respected, The people failed to notice when their privates were inspected."* The second cut, "Stop The War," dates from 1982 and first appeared on Rod's **"White Buffalo"** [1991]. A quarter of a century on, the question *"What has changed?"* is ringing in my ears. Following the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution of the late 1980's, MacDonald visited the country and also performed concerts. Inspired by this former Communist nation "For The People [Song For Czechoslovakia]" appeared on **"The Man On The Ledge"** [1994]. In the early 1990's MacDonald moved from New York City to Florida. "Days Of Rain," a climatic [no, NOT climactic] love song, hails from what I would loosely describe as Rod's sophomore 'Sunshine State' collection of songs **"Into The Blue"** [1999]. Considering the extremes of weather that Florida experiences, sunshine is an amusing misnomer.

A new song, "Two Americans" is a subtle comment on naturalized Americans – one Israeli, the other Lebanese. Now over three decades old "The Coming Of The Snow" is that rarity, a believable love song. "Ballerina" dates from 1976 and was recorded during that decade by the Rod MacDonald Band, but never included on an official release till now. The latter, is a remembrance of a former lover - *"She turned from me to another man"* - who proved to be a somewhat dogmatic dancer/wife. Composed over a quarter of a century ago, Fred Pohlman's "After The War" is something of a rarity on a MacDonald recording – a cover song – and led by Pete Levin's piano, it's a heartfelt number that reflects upon love won and lost.

Tracy Grammer adds her voice to "American Jerusalem" a cut on MacDonald's debut solo album **"No Commercial Traffic"** [1983]. The melodic acoustic guitar intro simply remains a classic, while the lyric - set in New York City - is a barbed reflection on commerce local, national and international. Like "American Jerusalem," "Soldiers" alludes to deals made *"in the fine marble halls."* Ike warned the American nation during his farewell address, to beware of the "military-industrial complex" and adopting an anti-war stance MacDonald's "Soldiers" explores the concept. The second cover song, "Half Heaven, Half Heartache," was penned by George Goehring – he plays piano on the cut - Wally Gold and Aaron H. Schroeder, and Rod is vocally supported on this rendition by fellow Floridian Ellen Bukstel. When recorded by Gene Pitney and released as a single back in 1962, this 'big ballad' peaked at # 12 on the U.S. Pop Chart. **"And Then He Woke Up"** [1996], MacDonald's first 'sunshine state suite,' featured the melodically fluent, but poignant ancestral reflection "I'll Walk In The Highlands." Descended from a Scottish bloodline, Rod's ancestors came to America via Nova Scotia.

"This One" draws to a close with a quartet of already familiar MacDonald compositions. From **"Bring On The Lions"** [1989] there's "After The Singing" and "Wings Of Light." The former is a joyously urgent celebration of human endeavour - and 'lyrical repetition' of the number four, while the similarly urgently paced latter reflects upon the transient nature of life. The **"White Buffalo"** album title cut is a gently paced, spiritually infused paean inspired by Rod's profound interest in the culture of numerous Native American nations - particularly the Oglala Sioux. From his aforementioned debut collection the closing song, "Every Living Thing," urges humankind to live in peace and harmony.

A fraction of the songs that exist in the public domain possess much more than a fleeting immediacy. MacDonald has for decades crafted in word and melody, living and breathing entities that bear repeated hearing. **"This One"** proves that contention.

Folkwax Score 9 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

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