



## Bittersweets **"Goodnight, San Francisco"** Compass Records

The unstated second part of the album title is **"Hello Nashville"** since this duo composed of West Coast bred Hannah Prater and Chris Meyers her East Coast born and raised partner in The Bittersweets – their musical union was forged in Shaky Town – now make their base in Music City, USA. In the process they've shrunk from the quintet that recorded the debut collection **"The Life You Always Wanted,"** to a trio with former Counting Crows/Third Eye Blind drummer Steve Bowman remaining in the fold.

Production of **"Goodnight, San Francisco"** is credited to Lex Price [Mindy Smith, Glenn Phillips, Toad The Wet Sprocket, Melissa Etheridge] while Nashville pickers and strummers aiding the cause include guitarist Doug Lancio [Patty Griffin], pedal steel guitarist Russ Pohl [Don Williams], bassist Dave Jacques [John Prine], cellist David Henry [Rod Picott, Josh Rouse, Guster] and Grammy nominee/guitarist Jason Lehning [Guster Erasure, The Bees] who also mixed the album.

Meyers is to Prater, as Dan Messé is to Sally Ellyson in Hem. In other words Meyers is the melody maker and wordsmith, Prater the interpretative voice – although, to be fair, in this instance Hannah penned "Tidal Waves" and collaborated with her partner on the eleventh track - "When The War Is Over." In terms of approach and style Meyers' lyrics are impressionistic. He furnishes snapshots, but does not attempt to complete the story – assuming that is, there was one in the first place.

Relationships torn asunder and participants nursing bruised egos and broken hearts abound in the album opener "Wreck" and in "My Sweet Love" and "Bordertown." For instance, "Wreck" portrays a cowboy cast adrift in an alien concrete world, whereas 'she' sleeps away her loneliness, with anyone. The final verse opens with the revealing lines *"I'm just a satellite, You're still the centre of my world"* while the first verse of "Is Anyone Safe?" reveals *"She's making him coffee, loving him gently, She's a satellite inside."* As for the chorus to the latter, that is firmly constructed around the line *"The fortresses we build become our lives."*

As for further lyrical repetition, there's mention of California in "Blue" and more specifically San Francisco in "Bordertown" and the album title track. The narrator references *"...your war torn hands"* in the chorus to "Birmingham," and of course I've already mentioned the title of the eleventh track. I harbour some concerns regarding the scenario and character in "45," since the person portrayed is obviously suicidal. Although there is no lyrical glorification of the act, the intent is suggested. In years to come, Chris may come to judge the song an indiscretion. Enough said. The "Tidal Waves" that wash over Prater's narrator are ones of emotion and sadness, while "Lies" is the only cut in this collection where Chris' voice is clearly discernible alongside Hannah's. "Goodnight, San Francisco" is a wistful, anthemic song of farewell.

The precise nature of the war in "When The War Is Over" is not defined. It matters not whether it's military, or the dividing of man from woman since, on five occasions, Meyers poses the question *"Is it ever over?"* And truth to tell, one conflict resolved, farther along, another invariably surfaces. Hang around long enough "When The War Is Over" – actually fifty-nine seconds - and your speakers will bounce back into action on the hidden, untitled twelfth cut. Three minutes twenty five seconds long, the song builds to a vocal and instrumental climax and given the opportunity to punt at a title, I'd guess "An Ocean Of Loving." However, I'd hoped we'd grown out of the hidden track syndrome.

Folkwax Score 8 out of 10

**Arthur Wood.**

