



Steve Forbert **"Strange Names & Other Sensations"** 429 Records

Between live albums, archive recordings and 'new' studio work-outs [including the Best Traditional Folk Album Grammy nominated Jimmy Rodgers tribute **"Any Old Time"**] this is Steve Forbert's eleventh release of the new millennium. In the vein of that old chestnut "How many [*you complete the blank*] does it take to change a light bulb?", the production of the twelve track **"Strange Names & Other Sensations"** is credited to Forbert and Tim Coats, with Marc Muller, Anthony Crawford and Garry Tallent. The sessions mostly took place at Tallent's Moondog Music studio in Nashville, a location where Mississippi bred Forbert has recorded a number of times, and additional recording took place at "Music City's" Willow Creek Music and in Neptune, New Jersey at Muller Recording. In truth production of **"Strange Names & Other Sensations"** is very much a 'family affair' since Forbert first worked with Coats in the role of engineer on **"Mission Of The Crossroad Palms"** [1995], with producer Muller on **"Just Like There's Nothin' To It"** [2004], while as a vocalist Crawford contributed to **"The American In Me"** [1992]. The Tallent connection began when Springsteen's bassist produced Steve's **"Streets Of This Town"** [1988].

Currently aged 52, in the album opener "Middle Age," Forbert reflects on passing the half-century milestone. Lyrically adopting a self-deprecating approach Steve intones *"Middle age is hectic, much less time for fun, Clearly it's a good thing, youth is wasted on the young"* and *"Middle age is further, closer to the end, This will be as young as you will ever be again"* this cheerful and peppy number prominently features the trumpet of Wayne Jackson [Memphis Horns]. Steve shines the spotlight on New England geography in the self-explanatory "Strange Names [North New Jersey's Got 'Em]," while "Simply Spalding Gray" finds Forbert eulogises the late actor, screenwriter and playwright [d. 2004]. Steve's lyric namechecks the Jonathan Deme directed **"Swimming To Cambodia"** [1987] and the Nick Broomfield directed **"Monster In A Box"** [1992] both films of Gray's [famous] monologues, the former being based on the actor's experiences in Southeast Asia while filming his part in Roland Joffe's **"The Killing Fields"** [1984], the latter concerned his experiences while writing his only novel **"Impossible Vacation."** Forbert's historically factual lyric mentions the 1967 suicide of Spalding's mother and the 2001 auto accident in Ireland in which Gray suffered severe injuries. On the latter, credited in the liner as 'Anthony Crawford – all music' he imbues the track with a Celtic sounding edge.

"Man, I Miss That Girl" and "You're Meant For Me" are rote love songs, the former tinged with regret, while the latter possesses a rose tinted outlook. The mandolin driven "I Will Sing Your Praise" is a hymn to the Creator, and is followed by another pair of soporific love songs - "Something Special" and "My Seaside Brown-Eyed Girl." Forbert then cuts to the political chase and 'tells it like it is' regarding the conflict in Iraq with the raucous electric-blues tinged "The Baghdad Dream" c/w the sound of exploding bombs. In terms of subjective inspiration "Thirty More Years" is the 'more serious twin' of "Middle Age." The guitar driven penultimate track, "Around The Bend," is the first Forbert instrumental since "Lucky" on his third album **"Little Stevie Orbit"** [1980], following which Steve reprises "Romeo's Tune" the 1979 # 11 U.S. Pop hit single that was taken from his sophomore album **"Jackrabbit Slim."**

Folkwax Score 6 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

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