



Various "**Going Driftless - An Artist's Tribute To Greg Brown**" Red House

Apart from his acknowledged prowess as time served *road warrior* of the species - folk musician, Brown was a pioneer from the *get go* in terms of retaining control of his own song catalogue. Way back in the late seventies Brown set up the Red House label, naming it after a barn on his South Iowa farm. In the mid-eighties, Greg passed control of the label to Bob Feldman, and as a result of intelligent and watchful nurturing Feldman has built it into one of America's finest independents. Apart from a couple of exceptions Brown's solo recordings continue to be issued by the Minnesota based imprint.

Initially a storyteller who used a broad canvas, Brown's recent albums have mostly contained *wall to wall* love songs. Considering that conventional gender bond it's somewhat appropriate that all the principal vocal contributors to this fourteen-track tribute disc should be female, and most of them possess folk/country/roots credentials. From the top of the heap there's Lucinda, Ani, Shawn, Mary Chapin and Iris. Current Red House acts Lucy Kaplansky and Eliza Gilkyson add their voice, as does former label-mate Leandra Peak [of Neal and Leandra], while the lesser known contributors include Robin Lee Berry and the Brown girls – Pieta, Zoe and Constie – Greg's daughters.

Four cuts source from the Folk NAIRD nominated album **Further In** [1996], two each from **One More Goodnight Kiss** [1988] and **The Poet Game** [1994] – a Folk NAIRD winner, plus there's one song each from **44 & 66** [1980], **Iowa Waltz** [1981], **One Night...** [1983], **Slant Six Mind** [1987] – nominated for a Folk GRAMMY, **Dream Café** [1992] and **Over And Under** [2000].

Greg's daughters perform *Ella Mae*, a song that Brown wrote for his maternal grandmother. In fact *the girls* feature in their father's lyric with the line "*I am a man who is rich in daughters.*" Lucinda Williams' interpretation of a song lyric can often sound lifeless, but on the opening cut, *Lately*, she instils some feeling and belief into Brown's words. On the other hand, Mark Olson joins his wife, Victoria Williams, on a quaint interpretation of *Early* that, frankly, doesn't do the song, or the album, any favours. As for the best efforts, there's *Wash My Eyes* from Leandra Peak, a seven minute plus rendition of *The Poet Game* by DiFranco [c/w no gender alteration to Brown's words] and the aforementioned Lucinda Williams effort, which appropriately features Bo Ramsey on electric guitar.

Brown's lyrics, typically, deal with the simple day to day facets of life – a sick child, a fondly remembered older relative, girlfriends and wives, the populating of the mid west and more. A fitting tribute for one of folks lesser sung heroes.

Folkwax Rating 6 out of 10

Arthur Wood
Kerrville Kronikles 09/02