



## Michael Troy **"Romancing The Moon"** self-release

Some five years on from delivering his, voice and acoustic guitar only, debut recording, **"Whispers In The Wind,"** Michael Troy unveils his sophomore song collection, **"Romancing The Moon."** In terms of the arrangements, it's a more polished affair with contributions by a handful of mainly acoustic, support players and vocalists. Born, raised and still resident, not many miles from his beloved Fall River, Massachusetts, this fifty something former blue collar worker first penned songs over a quarter of century ago, but only began playing them in the public domain a matter of a handful years back. These days Troy's hands, more than familiar with hard physical labour, pick and hold down guitar strings and convey his rhymes to paper.

On this collection, Michael's songs articulate events that occurred in the decades he spent putting bread on his family's table while employed in sweat shops [the Stella Ann Frocks dress factory], on a clamboat [the Ellie B captained by a former school friend Capt. Lou Lagace] and on numerous construction Massachusetts sites, while "Love Song," for instance, expresses undying affection for his wife, MaryLou. In the latter, Troy gives vent to his poet's heart with, *"To be with you, than without you, I'd walk on hot coals, a country mile"* and in contemplating the joy of being reunited in the afterlife, he writes *"There's a ship out on the ocean, Reserved for faithful souls, On a molten sea of gold."*

The album title cut opens this collection, and finds Michael initially reflecting upon passing of the father of an old close friend – *"an old mill hand from way back when."* It's a fact that when we're faced with the death of those close to us, we find solace in recalling what once connected us on this earthly plane – *"His father won't be makin' those fishing dates."* As the song progresses Troy focuses upon another passing, one that affected a whole town. Once upon a time Fall River boasted four hundred thriving mills, with looms that *"turned cotton to gold,"* but now they're all gone. In the third verse Troy captures the inexorable passage of time and the changes and choices that are an integral part of life with, *"When things get old and lose their salt, And it's time to go, ain't no one's fault, It's hard to let go, harder to remain."*

The passage of time and *rise and fall* of friendships is explored in "Roller Coaster." "Four Boats Down" recalls the thirteen-day period, a few years back, that saw ten Fall River fishermen perish at sea, as angry seas conveyed four local boats to Davy Jones locker. Well familiar with the risks those men took in plying their trade, Troy poetically muses, *"Fortune seekers – bottom reapers, Love slaves of the sea, The widow maker – father taker, Can steal your breath away."* If **"Romancing The Moon"** features a happy-go-lucky song – a lullaby even - it's, "Blue Moon." Michael's vocal is supported, on this track, by a sixties sounding girlie duo [Erinn Brown and Julie Doherty], and the lyric alludes to Earth's nearest celestial body as the *"big stone satellite."* A couple of cuts further on, there's the up-tempo, "Dream Chaser," a paean to surviving and making ones dreams come true. *"When the side of the mountain is all you can see, Just keep on climbing 'til you're where you want to be."*

In the opening chorus to "Ricky The Kid" Troy paints a portrait of his northern hometown, the folk who live there and the passage of the seasons, and includes the reflection *"Where we drank dreams – from a paper bag, And Jack Frost paints the sky in drag."* As the song unfolds a young punk, Ricky, who *"played life like war,"* is shot by police while attempting to rob a jewellery store. In reality this song is a powerful and honest, social commentary upon the wayward times we live in. The police who are called to the incident arrive as if they're, *"prepared for war,"* and Troy concludes, once the incident is resolved, *"there were no winners."* Ricky, *"A crazy kid with an empty gun,"* not only lay dead, but in *"friendly fire"* the police also gunned down an innocent man. Later, the song "Damien" focuses upon a similarly rootless

outcast from society. Described by Troy as a fatherless child, "Damien" has been incarcerated for gunning down another boy *"with his own .22"*. At his trial, Damien's only *raison d'être* was that, *"No man got the right, to talk about my mama, that way."*

In "Jacinta's Song," the narrator, once a wild and wilful person, recalls the past with *"I've made my sword, visible on the shelf, I've only cut myself all these years."* Older, and a little wiser, he now humbly calls for help with *"Cause my soul to heal, so I can carry my load."* Couched in universal terminology, *"my lifesaver"* in the song could refer to a woman, or even be a religious reference. In a similar – I feel religious – vein the penultimate track, "Scare Crow," poses the opening line question *"Scare crow out in the field, who will let you in?"* and continues *"Faith filled one, hung in the sun, driven by the wind, The work's done, the planters are gone, where nobody knows."* Troy uses the word *"father"* on a number of occasions in this song collection, and that *figurehead* resurfaces in the closing cut "The Thief." Once again, the lyric finds Troy commenting upon the desperate modern times we live in. In this instance, Michael employs *"father"* as a reference to God, and as the lyric unfolds *his son* returns to tussle – *"Show me what you're made of boy. I know you can fly" - with the devil.* The 21<sup>st</sup> century devil is, according to Michael Troy, a salesman.

There's a plaintive edge to Michael's vocal delivery that perfectly complements the thread of remembrance [of better times now past, and harder times currently] that pervades much of his material. At times, to me, Troy sounds like Tom Pacheco – for instance, in lyrical as well as vocal presentation on "The Thief" – and come to think of it that's no great stretch, since Tom was born and raised a matter of a handful of miles away from Fall River in New Bedford.

Folkwax Rating 9 out of 10

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