



## Mark Dvorak **"Every Step Of The Way"** Waterbug Records

A Chicago based musician, Dvorak has, in the past, mainly released albums containing cover songs and traditional material. With his latest album **"Every Step Of The Way,"** Mark becomes a fully-fledged songwriter with nine of the eleven credits. In his liner notes, Mark imagines Johnny Cash performing "Every Step Of The Way" as he walks through the pearly gates. In terms of a theme the narrator in this opening cut joyfully affirms how he has made his own way in the world, and is now ready to embark on the next great adventure – *"There is no easy road to the kingdom of salvation, You must carry the load to your final destination."* According to Dvorak the title "Don't Let The Blues Make You Bad" appears as a line in the popular 1945 Frankie Laine/Carl Fischer composition "We'll Be Together Again." Fischer was Laine's long time accompanist. A decade later, Chicago born Laine used the song as one of the themes for his nationally syndicated television show. It's apt that the melodic setting is a laid back blues, since Dvorak's lyric focuses on the loss of love. Founded on a Tex-Mex rhythm, and prominently featuring Iowa bred singer/songwriter Dave Moore on button accordion, "My Rose Of Jericho" would not be out of place on a Tom Russell album. As the tale unfolds a wayward young woman, spurred by wanderlust, is abandoned soon after finding a husband. Toward the close the narrator – her father – questions if she will ever settle down and expresses parental concern with *"Each night I pray, I hope she's okay, Where the devil she is, I can only guess."* It will come as no surprise that lyrically "Not War" is a protest song, and a rallying call for mankind to live in peace. Posing a series of question in verses one and two - relevant to soldiers in a combat situation, in the third verse Dvorak chides, *"Who teaches now, what Jesus preached? Not war"* and subsequently adds, *"His only gift was love and grace, Let us now His will embrace, Not war."*

During 1994 Dvorak visited the late Brownie McGhee [d. 1996] in his Oakland, California home and "One Couldn't Run, One Couldn't See" is a recollection of McGhee's performing partnership with Sonny Terry [d. 1986], no doubt inspired lyrically by their conversations during that two-day long visit. The McGhee/Terry partnership began in the early 1940's and lasted close on four decades. Aged four McGhee was stricken by polio the long-term effect being that he walked with a limp, while Terry was blind for most of his life following two childhood accidents. The title of Dvorak's song notes those afflictions, and founded on a blues figure, the lyric goes on to eulogise their respective instrumental skills – McGhee's with a guitar and Terry's on harmonica. In the liner booklet Dvorak dedicates "My Love Grows" to Chicago bred folk singer, Fred Holstein, who passed on January 12, 2004, aged 61. The song is an affectionate tribute to a dear friend and mentor. In the annals of Chicago folk history, Holstein was not only a performer, teacher and folklorist, but for a time part of owner of the now defunct city listening clubs Somebody Else's Troubles and Holstein's. Also a slow blues based number "Lucky In Love" closes with the declaration *"I'm so lucky and I'm in love with you,"* "That Old Man" is dedicated to Mark's late father, while "You'll Make It Somehow" finds the narrator declare that though heartbroken at this precise moment love will find the listener again.

One of two covers here, Howard Blake's melody "Walking In The Air" entered the public domain when it accompanied the animated film of Raymond Briggs' children's story **"The Snowman"** [1982]. Here, Dvorak picks the melody on an open D minor tuned guitar. The penultimate "Home," an easy listening number, reflects on the passage of the seasons and of being in love. It's soundly based on the premise *"Home is where the heart is."* Charles Chaplin penned the "Smile" melody in 1936 as the theme to his final silent movie **"Modern Times."** Lyrics were added eighteen years later by John Turner and Geoffrey Parsons and the song gave the late Nat King Cole a # 10 Billboard Pop hit the same year. Going on to

become a standard, in the last half century "Smile" has been covered by numerous artists including Tony Bennett, Barbara Streisand and Rob Stewart.

Dvorak's acoustic guitar playing throughout this collection is quite stellar, and on this self-produced recording, he's accompanied, in the main, by Keith Baumann [mandolin, resophonic guitar, national steel guitar] and Al Ehrich [bass].

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

**Arthur Wood.**

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