



Kate Campbell with Spooner Oldham **"For The Living Of These Days"** Large River Music

Of the fourteen songs featured on **"For The Living Of These Days,"** Kate co-wrote a trio, each with a different collaborator, but more about them later. The remainder, eleven cover songs, include one cut composed by Oldham and his wife, plus a couple of trad. arranged numbers. With the appearance of Kate's **"Wandering Strange"** [2001] and the associated EP **"Dear Little Stranger,"** this pastor's daughter, her husband Ira also holds a religious qualification, crossed over from being a contemporary storytelling singer/songwriter to an interpreter of sacred music. Although **"Wandering Strange"** contained original compositions penned by Kate, Ira, Spooner and others, more than half the material was drawn from hymnals. While the approach was hardly revelatory, it was a definite sea change. Of course Campbell had signalled the possibility with her fourth album **"Rosaryville"** [1999], where the ten original songs tackled spiritual themes.

While her **"Monuments"** [2002] and last year's **"Blues And Lamentations"** marked a return to the storytelling approach via Kate Campbell originals, **"Twang On A Wire"** [2003] was a tribute to nineteen-seventies country music hits. **"Sing Me Out"** [2004] and **"The Portable Kate Campbell"** [2004], excepting one new tune, featured new interpretations of songs from Campbell's solo albums, # two through four. A productive, yet mixed bag! Spooner has appeared as a support musician and songwriter on many of Campbell's previous outings, although **"For The Living Of These Days"** is the first occasion where his name has been featured so prominently.

If **"For The Living Of These Days"** treads a particular musical path, then it is one similar to **"Wandering Strange."** The album opens with "Jesus Christ," written during 1940, by Woody Guthrie. In the writer's own words *"I thought I had to put down on paper how I felt about the rich folks and the poor ones."* Kate's voice is solely accompanied by her acoustic guitar, and in the closing verse Guthrie hypothesizes how Jesus would have fared in contemporary times, *"This song was written in New York City, Of rich man, preacher, and slave, If Jesus was to preach like He preached at Galilee, They would lay Jesus Christ in his grave."* "If I Ever Get To Heaven" co-written by Kate and Spooner and featuring their voices, is a soulful sounding number that lyrically contemplates what 'future riches' lie beyond the pearly gates.

Mylon LeFevre was seventeen years of age and serving in the US Army when he wrote "Without Him." Two years later, 1963, Elvis Presley covered the song. Within a year "Without Him" had been covered by over one hundred artists. Songs in this collection drawn from hymnals include the trad. arr. Irish "Be Thou My Vision," "God Of Grace And God Of Glory" featuring the words of American Harry Emerson Fosdick and the "Cwm Rhondda" melody of Welsh born John Hughes, plus "There's A Wideness In God's Mercy" and the closing track "There Is Balm in Gilead." The "Prayer Of Thomas Merton" features the words of Thomas Merton [1915 - 1968], supported by Campbell's music.

Walt Aldridge and Mark Narmore, long established Campbell co-writers, also collaborated on songs that appeared on **"Wandering Strange"** [as did Spooner]. Here Walt's contribution is the piano led "Dark Night Of The Soul," while "Terrible Mercy," which questions the holocaust and more, is Mark's contribution. On this recording the latter tunes are separated by Spooner and Karen Oldham's "When I Let Jesus Take My Hand." As for mainstream covers - Bobby Braddock's "Would They Love Him Down In Shreveport" was a 1967 Top 10 U.S. Gospel single for the Oak Ridge Boys, while Kris Kristofferson's

album **“Repossessed”** [1986] featured his edgy “They Killed Him.” As well as Jesus, the lyric references Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, individuals who died in modern times for their beliefs. The penultimate song “Faces In The Water,” written by Dr. Greg McPherson, references the Maya Lin designed Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama. The structure is an inverted cone, and inscribed on the base are the names of forty people who died between 1954 – 1968 [*]. The Memorial is also a fountain, and the film of water that flows over the base of the cone gave rise to the song title and its lyric.

Note.

[*] – In 1954 the US Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation was unlawful. Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated during 1968.

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 08/06.