



David Olney and Sergio Webb with Jack Irwin **“Live At Norm’s River Roadhouse, Volume 1”**
Deadbeet Records

Norm’s River Roadhouse, located on five acres of land skirting the Cumberland River – at 7965 River Road Pike to be precise, is a Nashville area listening room that opened in July 2006. Self-released on the Deadbeet Records label, David’s accompanied on this live recording by ‘electric’ guitarist Sergio Webb [who also contributes on ukulele, lap steel, vocals and bullhorn] and percussionist Jack Irwin. Irwin and Olney produced the latter’s most recent studio outing **“One Tough Town”** [2007] and eight of the tunes from that disc are reprised on this sixteen-song collection.

Webb only contributed to a couple of **“One Tough Town”** cuts, but he is very much present on this set, adding a new feel and edge to the songs. Accompanying himself on harmonica David opens the show with the bluesy “Whistle Blow” the first track on the aforementioned [2007] disc, and follows with “Upside Down” – wherein the narrator relates how he is intent upon creating upheaval in his life - one of a quartet of Olney/John Hadley collaborations he performs at Norm’s. The latter number appeared on **“Migration”** [2005] and prefaces “Wait Here For The Cops” a high-energy song that is rapidly approaching thirty years of age – it appeared on Olney’s debut disc **“Contender”** [1981]. By way of enhancing the storyline, halfway through the number Webb’s guitar replicates the sound of an approaching police car siren.

Moving on, Olney return’s to **“One Tough Town”** for a trio of tunes, including two more Hadley co-writes. He prefaces “Sweet Poison” with a recollection of Socrates’ final days, while Sergio supports David’s rendition with layers of distorted [read grungy] guitar sounds. Webb switches to lap steel for the Latin rhythms that underpin the Olney/Gwil Owen co-write “Panama City,” a tale of living the high [and low] life in the Golf Coast Florida resort. David’s extended introduction includes the sly *“And what is that smell, oh that’s caramel candy, doesn’t that take you back to the lovely days of childhood, and oh, why that’s the unmistakable aroma of tawdry behaviour, welcome to Panama City.”* Featuring a spoken ‘bullhorn driven’ vocal by Webb, Olney completes the [three song] segue with “Postcard From Mexico” a tale of love, heartbreak, death and incarceration.

An introduction of the band complete, David delves into his back catalogue for “Titanic” his story of the ‘love affair’ between an ocean going liner and an iceberg, and moves on with readings of another quartet from **“One Tough Town,”** including the title cut and Townes’ “Snake Song.” Interspersed among the latter are the previously unrecorded “Ukulele Waltz” and “Sunset On Sunset Boulevard.” The former, co-written with Sergio Webb, is a waltz-paced instrumental played on two uke’s [and mouth trumpet accompaniment by Olney?], while at over six minutes long, with Olney at his storytelling finest, the gentle paced latter focuses on a young woman’s rise [and early demise] – *“The pretty thing with grand ambitions, She’s going to be a star someday, So sweet, so young, so pure, so innocent, Unless you are standing in her way”* - in the suburbs of Tinseltown.

When I saw Olney perform in Texas a few weeks ago, he delivered a ‘hell and brimstone’ narration of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s opium stimulated ode “Kubla Khan” [*], and repeats that approach here, before plunging headlong into the disc finale in which his American Civil War recollection “Lee’s Highway” [from **“Roses”** [1991]] is segued with Tommy Womack’s rockabilly influenced “The Highway’s Coming.” The latter song, c/w flagrantly irreverent lyrics, first appeared on the Womack’s **“Circus Town”** [2002].

A 1000 copy limited edition, “**Live At Norm’s River Roadhouse, Volume 1**” is housed in a stiff, brown card gatefold liner and features artwork designed by Ms. Julie Sola and printed at Nashville’s historic Hatch Show Print. At almost eighty minutes duration the sub-title “**Volume 1**” hints that there’s more to come.....bring it on.

Note.

[*] - Published 1816, it was written at an earlier date, and is also sub-titled “**Vision In A Dream. A Fragment.**”

Folkwax score 8 out of 10.

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 06/08.