



Andrew Calhoun “**Shadow Of A Wing**” Waterbug Records

Since the appearance, back in 1999, of his seventh solo album “**Where Blue Meets Blue**” on his rejuvenated Waterbug imprint, Andrew Calhoun has cut a further trio of albums of which “**Shadow Of A Wing**” is the latest. This album features eighteen self-penned songs, the longest being a *mere smidgen* over three and a half minutes duration, and there’s even a handful of tunes that *come, say their piece, and fade away* in two or less minutes. According to the liner booklet the contents of “**Shadow Of A Wing**” were composed by Calhoun between 1978 and 2004, and fifteen of the cuts were recorded in Portland, Oregon by Rob Stroup. Stroup also shares the album production credit with Andrew. The support players, on the Oregon cuts, include Elizabeth Nicholson [harp], Joe Root [accordion], Bob Soper [fiddle, mandola] and recent Tracy Grammer sideman, Donny Wright [bass, dobro]. Of the remainder trio [of songs], “The Promise” and “Fluttering Wings” were cut in Evanston by Steve Rashid, while Mark Fretham recorded “Inside Out.” The precise vintage of the latter isn’t revealed in the liner booklet.

In the liner notes, Andrew offers, “*These songs are about love, and my way of loving, which is either a co-dependent train wreck, or a sacramental journey toward revelation, depending on faith.*” In other words, they run the gamut from a self-inflicted hell to an inspirational flirtation with paradise. So let’s see how love, *in all its forms/situations*, is represented here.....

Line on line, image upon image, the lyric to the opening number, “Meditation Song,” focuses upon things of the Earth and of the sky. Prominently featuring Nicholson’s harp and Wright’s stand-up bass, Calhoun’s words unfold as pure poetry. The narrator of “Sammy” initially mentions the approach of the Grim Reaper, and then goes on to inform the person who is listening [to him/her], “*Your name is engraved within a heart, Where you’d be sorely missed*” and “*Not every ghost is holy, Not every cause is just, Not every haunting brings you down, Not every star is crossed.*” Robert Frost opened his famous poem “The Road Not Taken” with the words *two roads*. Practically the antithesis of Frost, rather than explore the *fresh, virginal path less travelled*, Calhoun’s “Two Roads” takes as its focus, adultery. Weak willed, at the outset the narrator in “Daughter Of A Drunk” mentions “*She had this sorry story, She had these pretty eyes*” and even speculates “*She might have been a princess, Or a body in a trunk*” but as the song evolves the images become strange and doom laden.

“A Hoosier In Paris” finds Calhoun massaging his funny bone. The key to the performance of this lyric hinging upon *the literal* vs. the *actual French* pronunciation of words/place names such as Paris [*Paree* – “*the s is silent*”], Versailles [*Ver-sigh* not *Ver-sails*] and the like. The lines “*I couldn’t seem to move her, And I felt us start to drift apart, As we wandered through the Louvre,*” is an indication of what to expect. Set in Venice, “Single Roses” is a tale that launches with “*I saw a pretty woman there, And she was selling flowers, A fiddle player’s daughter was, Walking on the water with her flowers*” and goes on to contend that “*Flowers in the bloom, Flowers in the bud, Free their wild perfume, For the old and new in love.*” Years later, “*Give and take a crooked mile,*” the storyteller observes another woman selling flowers “*I knew her by her smile*” and continues “*Beauty fades she said to me, But I will beg to differ, With a wild rose held close to me, Walking on the water.*” Where “A Hoosier In Paris” is humorous, “Farewell Butterfly” is lyrically surreal – “*Jimmy Carter’s navel in a root beer can*” being an example.

The lyrics of “**Shadow Of A Wing**” tend toward the impressionistic, particularly on the shorter songs, yet given wrapt attention on each visit they deliver new insights.

Folkwax Rating 8 out of 10

Arthur Wood

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