



Cadillac Sky **"Blind Man Walking"** Skaggs Family Records

One song apart, namely the Mike Jump composed penultimate 'closer to God' themed "Mountain Man," [Hugh] Bryan Simpson [mandolin, fiddle, vocals] the thirty something Fort Worth born/bred, leader/founder of the bluegrass quintet, Cadillac Sky aka C-Sky, had a hand in composing the twelve remaining cuts on the group's sophomore release **"Blind Man Walking."** The mid-album, spirited instrumental "Neighbourhood Bully's Long Look In The Mirror" – it sounded like an Area Code 615 out-take – was composed by the quintet. Circa 1998/2000 Simpson resided in Nashville and his co-writers on the **"Blind Man Walking"** songs include Bob Regan, Matt Ross, Wade Kirby, Ashley Gorley, John Pennell, James Slater and Kris Bergenes. As for other pickers, pluckers and strummers in C-Sky they are Walnut Valley award winners Matt Menefee [banjo] and Ross Holmes [fiddle, vocals], plus Mike Jump [guitar, vocals] and 'recent recruit' Andy Moritz [upright bass, vocals].

Great things are predicted in the future for this aggregation, and doubtless Ricky Skaggs gauged that potential prior to signing C-Sky to his label last Spring. If I have a focus when it comes to listening [assessing and reviewing] songs/albums, then first and foremost in melody and word I seek originality. A unique storytelling lyric will certainly get my wrapt attention, and a tuneful supporting melody most definitely helps. In terms of a whole album, reviewers are lucky if they hear examples of 'the aforementioned marriage' a handful of times a year. The rest of the time the fare involves ploughing through hour-upon-hour of retreads of the same old, same old themes. As a defined genre of roots music, I have rarely been moved by bluegrass be it traditional/newgrass/dawg/spacegrass et al – musically speaking, speed and dexterity in playing an instrument 'cuts no ice' with me - and the latter insight should temper your interpretation of what I say from now on.

It sounds like you're listening to a damaged old vinyl record, in doormat condition, during the crackle laded initial twenty-five seconds of the five-minute long, album opening cut "Born Lonesome." Co-written by Simpson and Nashville based Californian Bob Regan [ex-President NSAI], the lyric is pretty much explained by the song title. "Insomniac Blues For Matthew" kicks in at an unbelievable and dizzying, almost nausea inducing pace, lyrically references 'counting over 100 different herds of sheep' as a possible cure [if that was an attempt at intentional humour, it's limp!], and the musicians barely take a second to draw breath during the song's three-minute duration. Other 'delivered at an unhealthy rate of knots' tunes on this album include "Wish I Could Say I Was Drinking" by Simpson/Gorley, Simpson's own 'one night stand/no place feels like home' themed "Motel Morning" and "Can't Trust The Weatherman" where Messrs Simpson and Gorley were assisted by Wade Kirby in the creation of a hapless tale featuring an unlucky male/female duo of bank robbers.

The black/white Southern gospel styled Simpson/Slater tune "Sinners Welcome" subjectively opens in the county prison where 'a sinner' is 'serving 25,' goes on to reference 'fire and brimstone tent preachers' and having 'found religion' moves on to request redemption for the incarcerated 'sinner' and, for that matter, all of mankind's sinners. Penned by Bryan Simpson and Kris Bergenes, the lyric to "Never Been So Blue" references a death and burial, that *'willows are weeping,' 'twin fiddles playing,'* how *'the whippoorwill sings'* and *'all the angels in heaven whisper his name'* – but it's the twee *"The blue grass has never been so blue"* on which I rest my case, regarding this 'we threw in every familiar image we could think of, including the kitchen sink' tribute to the late Bill Monroe [d. 1996] which, furthermore, closes with an instrumental tribute to the *'boy from Kentucky.'*

Arthur Wood.
Kerrville Kronikles 01/07.