



John Fullbright – SONGS (Album Review) Thirty Tigers/Blue Dirt Records

It's enigmatic. SONGS, simply for the sake of the words and music.....

As with Fullbright's studio debut FROM THE GROUND UP (2012), SONGS was co-produced with Wes Sharon and recorded at the latter's studio 115 Recording in Norman, Oklahoma. SONGS delivers, in the main, *stripped down* renditions of one-dozen originals by this son of Okemah. Four songs solely feature John on permutations of acoustic or electric guitar, piano or organ; on another quartet he's joined by David Leach (bass) and on *Until You Were Gone* by Ryan Engleman (steel guitar). While there's nothing to indicate that a band album was intended, the remaining trio of songs feature additional players. More about them later.....

Self-released on Fullbright's own imprint, Blue Dirt Records, and marketed via Thirty Tigers, John's sophomore studio outing, is launched by the cheerful sounding *Happy*. Supported by Leach's bass, in addition to playing acoustic/electric guitars, Fullbright drums and whistles. The lyric finds the writer repeatedly enquire of his (writing) muse "*Tell me what's so bad about happy?*" John's piano and acoustic guitar are supported on *When You're Here* by Sharon (bass), Daniel Walker (C3 organ), Tony 'Buffalo' Ware (electric guitar) and Mike Meadows (drums, percussion) an Austinite with a truly delicate touch. Based on *live* evidence, I hold the latter contributor in high regard. While there's allusion to "*Some are lovers, some are leeches, Summer flings on summer beaches,*" a universality is embedded in the lyric to *When You're Here* sufficient that John could (once again) be referencing his muse. Simplicity resides in the voice and acoustic guitar interpretation of the optimistic *Keeping Hope Alive*. According to John's lyric what *She Knows*, without a shadow of doubt, is "*a lot about the rain.*" The latter is one of many things not discovered simply "*in passing,*" and a hymn like feel is woven into the melody of this piano led number.

The *universality* I alluded to earlier could apply to *Until You Were Gone*, and almost certainly does to *Write A Song*. Sharon, Leach and Meadows aid Fullbright's guitars and Wurlitzer on *Never Cry Again*, while John adds harmonica and percussion to the *Going Home* mix. Written when this, now, 25-year-old was a teenager, mid-song in *All That You Know* the Oklahoman sings "*Two trees will grow together so closely, That they become one and together they stay*" and the lyric ends "*Love all that is real, love all that you know.*" Sharon, Leach and Meadows once again step up to the plate for *The One That Lives Too Far*. In the eight-page liner booklet the lyric of the almost eight-minute long, penultimate *High Road* bears the credit Fullbright/traditional. Fullbright's template is undoubtedly the traditional Scottish ballad *The Bonnie Banks O' Loch Lomond*, and *High Road* closes with a solo piano reprise of the melody. Also penned during John's teen years, it relates a hardscrabble farming tale featuring Susie – "*a pearl of a woman*" - and Jack – "*a golden man.*" Sat at the piano Fullbright draws SONGS to a close with *Very First Time*, wherein a familiar friend resurfaces "*.....i hate to be alone, Between love everlasting, And meaningless rhyme.*"

<http://www.johnfullbrightmusic.com/>

Brought to you from the desk of the Folk Villager.

aka Arthur Wood.

Copyright of this work is retained by Kerrville Kronikles 04/14.

(355 words)

Photo Credits:

John Fullbright, 2011 Kerrville Folk Festival (Credit: Folk Villager)

L. to R. Tony 'Buffalo' Ware and John Fullbright, 2011 Kerrville Folk Festival (Credit: Folk Villager)