

DAVE CARTER & TRACY GRAMMER

“Drum Hat Buddha”

Ordinary Town / Tillman Co. / Disappearing Man / The Power And The Glory / 236-6132 / 41 Thunderer / Gentle Arms Of Eden / I Go Like The Raven / Highway 80 (She's A Mighty Good Road) / Love, The Magician / Merlin's Lament / Gentle Soldier Of My Soul

Producer : Dave Carter & Tracy Grammer

Signature Sounds Recordings

SIG 1266

(41m 23s) [US]

Dave Carter is, without doubt, a deeply spiritual being, a philosopher, a mathematician, and darned fine musician and song poet. Proof of the latter skill, can be heard in the round dozen selections that constitute the duo's third outing. There is a marksman's accuracy about Dave's word selection, in the images they conjure and the pictures that they paint, as the stories contained in the lines and verses of his compositions evolve. Taken as entities, certain of his lyrics appear subjectively as impenetrable as the Gordian Knot, while others possess a feel good, down to earth simplicity. Given your wrapped attention, they will all fire your imagination one way or another.

As for mathematics, the vocals on **Drum Hat Buddha** are shared equally, between Dave and Tracy, in a symmetrically alternating series. If you take the initial and latter six cuts, as separate units that is. When this pair appear in concert, it is as if the two become one person right before your eyes, such is the awesome empathy they share. For a performing partnership that is a mere three years young, such instinctive communication is nothing less than miraculous. Tracy's playing – violin, fiddle and mandolin - and singing, has leapt another pair of notches relative to **Tanglewood Tree**. In fact, they appear to have approached some of these cuts, instrumentally, with almost reckless abandon....an abandon that works perfectly.

Drum Hat Buddha was recorded at Billy Oskay's studio, Big Red, just outside of Dave 'n' Tracy's adopted home of Portland, Oregon. They were assisted in the enterprise by a number of local pickers, plus Lorne Entress [drums/percussion] from Mark Erelli's band, and on vocals, Portland singer songwriter, Claire Bard. Once a member and co-founder of Nightnoise, Oskay has engineered a recording that warms to the, mostly, acoustic instruments used.

So what of Dave's latest epics....in the opening cut, "Ordinary Town," the small town *saint* who is confronted by resistance among the city fathers, becomes living proof that - two millennia since Christ, little has changed, in the way of acceptance, for a person who chooses to act a little differently. Denison Dam is located at the mouth of Lake Texoma, near Oklahoma City. It was the scene of an appalling flood over forty years ago, and is the setting for "Tillman County." The physical union of a man and a woman is described in the opening verse of "Disappearing Man." Sadly, by the end of this tragedy, the heroine's wishes for a child are unfulfilled, as she lives her remaining days alone. Six years ago, ala Jack Kerouac, Dave Carter drove from Oregon to Tennessee, and spent a week in Nashville. He performed on Writer's Night at the songwriter's club, Douglas Corner. While the latter journey may have been the inspiration for "The Power And Glory," it is not a biographical song. It ends with the resigned, but telling, conclusion *"the power and the glory ain't all that they tell you."* "236-6132" and "Highway 80 [She's A Mighty Good Road]," constitute Carter's contribution to light hearted, easier listening – aka *let's kick up our heels and have some fun* - on to this collection. The former is an infectious, happy go lucky love song, while the latter is an *above average* trucking tune. In a set that is immersed in poetic [and for that matter, cinematic] images, "41 Thunderer" is a classic. The thunderer, it appears, was Billy the Kid's handgun of choice. *"She slid like a viper from her tooled leather dress,"* refers, of course [now, what were you thinking ?], to the holster where Billy's gun lay slumbering, awaiting its next call to dispense death. You may detect from the title that, "Gentle Arms Of Eden" is a song about the origin and evolution of life on this spinning sphere. The lyric focuses on how, as mankind has multiplied, our species has affected the ecological balance of the planet. Merlin first appears in the lyric of "I Go Like The Raven," and the melody skips along at a breakneck speed. That enigmatic character from Arthurian legend resurfaces in

“Merlin’s Lament,” a tale of potent love and the resulting loss of power. In “Love, The Magician” a *“fair-haired desdemona and her ramblin’ guitar boy”* are being pursued by her father. Using the Native American concept of *shape shifting*, on those occasions when the pursuing parent comes close to finding the pair, all he sees are two otters, and latterly two fleeing lovebirds. The rhythm and words of the closing “Gentle Soldier Of My Soul” is reminiscent, at times, of the 23rd Psalm, while subjectively it is a tender love song.

So there you have it.....by the way, Dudley Moore was wrong, 10 is totally possible, and **Drum Hat Buddha** is one of hell of a poetic 11. Sadly, we can only score five here.

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 10/01