



Steve Fisher **"The Coming Attraction"** no label

Breaking cover after a four-year silence, Steve Fisher's **"The Coming Attraction"** is a fifteen-song collection of originals that sparkles like a multi-faceted diamond from the get go. Fisher isn't a conventional storyteller per se. In fact the personal appellations *me*, *my* and *I* regularly occur in his lyrics, yet in summation Steve's *simple* uncluttered words constitute stories for life. Homilies. Eulogies. Spiritual enlightenment. Song poet introspection and self-flagellation are *no part* of Fisher's oeuvre.

For well over two decades the everyday, life-affirming tales that were the currency of the late Kate Wolf's lyrics have been, for me, a place of wonder to revisit when in need of spiritual renewal. My countryman, Dougie MacLean, has consistently written about a time and place, largely set in Scotland, when life was *simpler* and closely bound to the life-giving earth. Fisher possesses an equally powerful gift in *the marriage* of word and melody. A vast chasm opened up when we exchanged the push button immediacy and power of the chip for, say, the *simpler*, horse drawn plough. The aforementioned song scribes, and others, are our life-line to reality.

So far I've employed the word *simple*, or derivatives of it, three times. Lest confusion has set in, in relation to what I mean by *simple*, let me say that Fisher's lyrics do not wrestle with complexity. Earlier, I used the term *everyday* in relation to Wolf, and that is where Steve, *subjectively*, fairly and squarely pitches his tent. Of course, quite naturally, Fisher employs the occasional poetic device, as in "The Coming Attraction" where the next movie and the ones that will follow at the "*old Marquee*," are compared to the cycle of friends who pass through our lives as they evolve, decade upon decade. In terms of a lyrical sub-device, the next new friend also becomes, *the coming attraction* as well as "*a brand new mystery*." Steve also alludes to the passage of time as "*slippery*." Where the songs of Wolf and MacLean have been known to touch my *inner core* causing tear duct moisture, a King Size box is nowhere near adequate to cope with the purity, honesty and beauty of "The Coming Attraction." The ultimate aim [and success] for the songwriter lies in creating the universal. Taken collectively **"The Coming Attraction"** is a fully realised symphony, in which the foregoing title cut is but one magnificent movement.

Death is one of the themes that thread's itself through the lines of "Son, No One Knows You Well," as Fisher recalls a fellow songwriter, now passed, who "*never banked that much on fortune and fame*." Later, Steve attests how "*I listened closely to every word he had to say*." Despite having lived a full life "*somewhere between heaven and hell*" the deceased songwriter would postulate, "*in the long run, no one knew me well*." While the foregoing was true, Fisher succinctly adds, as the song closes, that it really didn't matter, since "*in the long run, I loved him more than these words will tell*." With no credit in the liner, I am left wondering if the late Al Grierson was the deceased songwriter. There's a hot, lazy, Texas afternoon feel to "Home In Time For Dinner" – "*watch the horses in the pasture, leave the dogs to their sleeping, put a stop to all this thinking*" - reminiscent, in fact, of the Keen/Lovell penned Texas classic "Front Porch Song." Rather than waste too many words of praise for "The Puppeteer" let me merely say that an option is to place "God" in control of the strings, and the meaning of the "*larger plan*" will become clear.

"Who Knows, Not Me" appears at first sight to be practically a throwaway title, yet the truth is that even the most thoroughly educated [and rounded] individual is far from being all knowing and all seeing in terms of "*the grand design*." "Down Here," a long time personal favourite, opened the Steve Fisher/Jamie Bryd collaboration **"The Looking Glass"** [1999]. Although the actual location is not specified, and while

not a total fit, lyrically, my personal interpretation remains Kerrville's Quiet Valley Ranch. "*Down here water tastes like wine, Down here clocks on the wall run slow all the time,*" and "*Down here it's like the Garden Of Eden,*" are just a few of the aspects of that annual musical retreat and source of regeneration/inspiration. Alternatively, once more reflecting upon the universal, "Down Here" can be *any place* that we consider *special*.

The melodically effervescent "The Ever Open Door" may, subjectively, be a spiritual love song, but the lines "*a child is called again and again to the thrill of the slide or swing*" recall the unsullied innocence we all once possessed. "Photographs," is an almost four minute long movie in which the camera simply enters a bedroom and closes in "*on the table by the light*" on which there's an old black and white picture of a "*six year old, little girl, a hand to hold*" walking home from her first day at school. Fisher then imagines "*the picture that's really there*" which was taken just last year "*but the child still shines through, And I hold her hand and I won't let go, As we walk along on our way back home.*" It may be nothing more or nothing less than a song that closes with the line "*It's because we know love is true,*" but it's a lyric that has been *taken*, like some photographs, from a very subtle angle. In the words of Guy Clark, *simplicity* is the *stuff that works*.

Fisher traces his *restless* family bloodlines in "This Heart [My Parents Gave Me]," and openly declares his admiration and affection for his parents and forebears. His mother "*Was raised with four brothers, By her aunts and her grandmother, They were poor...poor...Indian poor,*" while his father's blood "*came from the Amish.*" Steve recalls how his parent's moulded him "*With one hand on the Bible, And the other hand upon the heart, That shows me what to do.*" On one level, "Mother's Return" could be interpreted as a child's lullaby, while self-discovery and realisation are the themes that permeate "A Point Of View."

The closing pair of cuts, respectively "Thank You" and "Children," are inextricably linked. If you will, they constitute the climax of the symphony. The former, a hymn of praise for each God given day, opens with the line "*Days pass like Christmas*" and Fisher further employs the festive allusion in "*They're unfolding, And unfolding, As from bright paper*" by way of delivering his 365/24/7 message. If the gift of time is reason to constantly say "Thank You" then, irrespective of age, Steve's "Children" is an analogy for mankind. We are yesterday, today and.....tomorrow - *the coming attraction*.

This recording, *aural medicine for the soul*, is only available meantime by mail order from Steve Fisher **c/o 615 E. Caddo, Cleveland, Oklahoma 74020, U.S.A.** The disc costs \$15.00. Please add \$1.50 for shipping to locations in North America. For other *worldly* locations add \$5.00 for shipping.

Folkwax Rating 10 out of 10

Arthur Wood
Kerrville Kronikles 05/03