



David Olney **"The Wheel"** Loudhouse Records

"The Wheel" is the third consecutive studio album that Olney has recorded/produced at Nashville's Sound Vortex Studio in association with Robb Earls. Released in Y2K by the Nashville independent, Dead Reckoning, **"Omar's Blues,"** a fourteen-song collection, was *compartmentalised* by the full-length songs "Omar's Blues" #'s 1, 2 and 3. Fifteen tracks long, **"The Wheel"** is similarly sub-divided, by a handful of short songs, respectively the opening cut "Wheels," "Stars," "Now I Start," "Precious Time, Precious Love" and the closer, "Round." Olney performs the vocal on first and third cut, while Carole Edwards fulfils that role on second and fourth. Where "Round" lasts for almost one minute forty seconds and features the voices Olney and Edwards, none of the remaining quartet exceeds thirty seconds in duration.

The first full-length song on the disc, "Big Cadillac," featuring some bluesy guitar licks from Mike Henderson, previously appeared on Olney's albums **"Top To Bottom"** [1991] and **"Live In Holland"** [1994]. Lyrically the song draws analogies to making the *big time*, via verses that describe large well-appointed cars, a winning hand at cards and mountains of greenbacks. A gospel choir, The McCallum Brothers, support Olney on the chorus of "Voices Across The Water." Bearing a quasi-religious lyric the narrator concludes *"I come here with nothing but a handful of dust, to a handful of dust I will return"* and mentions tumultuous events such as *"whirlwinds"* and having to *"run like the devil across burning sand."*

In a solo career spanning practically twenty years, and fourteen albums, Olney has established a reputation as one of the finest narrative songwriters that has put pen to paper. There are no discernable story songs on **"The Wheel,"** rather the material focuses on situations such as, the horizon and the highway in "Chained And Bound To The Wheel." By way of balancing the blues/soul thrust of many of the songs here, "Now And Forever" is a tender love song, supported by an acoustic finger-picked guitar and a *melancholic* sounding fiddle. I'd prefer to believe that the song title "God Shaped Hole" is drawn from the writings of Soren Kierkegaard, the nineteenth century Danish philosopher, rather than Tiffanie Debartolo's recent novel of the same name. The song opens with *"Well I got religion, and I got it bad. It made me crazy, it made me mad, so I blew it off."* Lyrically the narrator goes on to describe that now he's *free*, he's as *lost* as he wants to be. Essentially a song about indecision and loss, the *God Shaped Hole* turns up in the lyric as a gambling club, a woman who has left, Jesus, an unmarked grave and more.....

In the country/soul flavoured, and self-explanatory titled, "The Girl I Love," Olney closes with the line *"Otis sings, I've been loving you too long."* A trio of female backing singers – Natalie Chenault, Leah Eneas and Danita Wilson – support Olney on the latter cut, and on the equally soulful "All The Love In The World" which follows.

"The Wheel" is available to order on the net at <http://www.loudhousemusic.com/home.htm> The motto of this fledgling Texas based label is, *"we're little but we're loud."* Sometimes that's the only way to make yourself heard in this preoccupied world.....

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

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Kerrville Kronikles 02/03