



Anthony da Costa & Abbie Gardner **“Bad Nights/Better Days”** da Costa Records

We reviewed seventeen-year old da Costa’s latest solo offering **“Typical American Tragedy”** a few months ago, and hot on the heels of that release comes this thirteen song duo effort with friend Abbie Gardner of the roots trio Red Molly. Produced by Fred Gillen Jr. and recorded over three days in mid-February at Woody’s House in Croton-on-Hudson, the duo is supported by Emily Price [cello], Steve Kirkman [National guitar, vocals], Oliver Hill [violin], Mark Murphy [double bass], Mark Dann [electric bass] and Gillen [percussion, vocals].

da Costa penned nine of the **“Bad Nights/Better Days”** songs, thirty-three year old Gardner composed three, and the pair collaborated on “Someday.” A neat synopsis of the subject matter currently appears on Anthony’s [revamped] web site and runs to *“Over the course of the record, in the tradition of an old-school concept LP, love is found, confused, lost, rediscovered and redefined.”* Could have said it in many more words, but I couldn’t have said it better!

Pretty much from the outset, in addition to the forcefully plucked acoustic guitar, “Spent,” the album opener, features a discernible fuzzed electric guitar. In a similar support role, the instrument appears on the ensuing cut, Gardner’s “Red Barn” - wherein the narrator mourns love that’s taken for granted and confesses a penchant for dancin’ in the moonlight – and nowhere else on this disc. Price’s cello and a gently fingerpicked acoustic guitar perfectly set the mood for “Down On My Knees,” wherein the lovelorn narrator reveals his innermost thoughts while, in support, Gardner’s voice subtly weaves in and out of the mix. On “Someday,” the sole Ab n’ Ant co-write, as if replicating conversation, at least at the outset, they take solos on alternate verses and their voices combine in crescendo on others [including the chorus]. Therein the protagonists burned by the intensity of their passion, recall their affair in retrospect, and express the hope that when they next find love *“...we’ll stop writing the same songs over and over again.”*

The sonically percussive, rhythmically rowdy “Pocket” features the familiar phrase *“....I am down on my knees.”* Where a ‘ghostly’ banjo is heard as “Pocket” fades, a similar effect – played on violin or cello? - is employed on “Someday.” Gardner’s narrator in the delightful waltz paced “Crazy In Love,” voices the wish for her ‘man’ to be more demonstrative with his expressions and professions of love. The protagonists in “Let Me Die In Your Arms” dream of a long and happy future, therefore utterly belying the song title, while Garner’s third contribution “I’d Rather Be” is quite a simply a gem wherein the narrator states, plainly, that she’s not going to *“...waste my time waiting for love, From a man who’s grown tired of me.”*

At the outset of “Nothing Left” da Costa paints the portrait of an alcohol fuelled derelict, who, with *“winter creeping in”* dreams of love restored in some verdant ‘green’ place where *“.... the clouds aren’t so mean.”* Toward the close Gardner delivers the wife’s/lover’s reply *“I tried all I could to save him, He would not let go of me, so you see, He could never fall to sleep, My love was not enough.”* The track climaxes with Ab n’ Ant’s layered voices – she repeats the [foregoing] reply, while he delivers three lines of the chorus, and their voices unite on *“My love was not enough”* - following which da Costa ‘literally whispers’ the closing *“He took the pills she gave, Now there’s one black rose at the foot of his grave.”* Confusion and desperation concerning the definition of ‘real love’ pervades “Better Days,” and the album closes with the optimistic “I Feel Like Dancin’.”

In the pantheon of male/female singing duos, past or still present, be they pop, folk, country or whatever aural concoction, here, da Costa and Gardner more than hold their own – “I’d Rather Be” and the utterly desperate “Nothing Left” being noteworthy highlights. I guess that it’s no word of a lie to state that teen

da Costa's songwriting output is prodigious. That said, in terms of production maybe it's time for him to inject new blood into the equation. In that regard, I wonder what Lorne Entress or, for that matter, Messrs. Kassirer or Hickman of Josh Ritter's road band would have made of his and Abbie's songs. Hell, I'm even thinking "Come on down to Congress House in Austin."

Folkwax score 8 out of 10.

### **Arthur Wood.**

Kerrville Kronikles 07/08.

#### **Spent**

See your face in the crowd and I can't even think  
The timing is wrong and the songs aren't right  
I'd go over to the bar, but I can't even drink  
Yeah the thought alone of you has got me hammered tonight

Your stare is strong and my knees are weak  
Palms sweaty and my hands, they shake  
Mouth is wide, but I can't even speak  
I ain't got nothin' left to give you that you did not take

#### **CHORUS**

I'm spent tonight  
I'm spent  
I'm over it, cause it came, and it went  
I been choppin' away at trouble  
And I did not make a dent  
Call me spent tonight I'm spent

Last time I saw you, you were smiling away  
But I don't recall if it lasted long  
Cause you see the worst in things, you've always been that way  
And you never ever seem to think you're wrong

Oh Lord Jesus, help me now  
Help me find that blinding light  
Cause in that old book that they wrote, you always came through somehow  
And I guess I's kinda hopin' you might

#### **CHORUS**

So I'll drown my sorrows in a river of tears  
And you'll take yours to the bartering line  
Trade 'em away for a new set of fears  
Maybe then you'll stop wasting my time

#### **CHORUS**

### **Red Barn Gardner**

There's a red barn up on the hill  
But you don't know, You don't see  
I dance there when the moon is still  
But you don't know, you don't see

I used to wait at home where you should be  
You don't know, you don't see  
(But) there was moss growing on my feet  
you don't know, you don't see

You go on like you're pure as snow but you've got someone else I know  
She has your touch and I have your clothes,  
If you're leaving baby... I wish you'd just go

There's a fire in my chest, I'm 'bout to explode

But you don't know, You don't see  
you take my love like it's something I owe  
But you don't know and you don't see

In every one of your hellos there's a goodbye waiting to go  
I miss you baby don't you see,  
I miss you baby... constantly

There's a red barn up on the hill...  
You don't know, you don't see...  
If you don't kiss me (baby), maybe he will...  
You don't know, you don't see

I don't know what you'd see if you really laid your eyes on me  
Cause there's a red barn up on the hill...

### **Down On My Knees**

Every time I hear bout you going back to him  
I break, I am breaking  
I don't even care, I don't care at all  
So why am I shaking?

And you can say no, even when I say please  
Just don't let me go, I am down on my knees

You are just a dream in the back of my head  
You're there, and we are sailing  
Floating like a boat on the ocean blue  
And the gulls they are wailing

And we can make out, or we can lay neath the trees  
Let go of your doubt, I am down on my knees

Oh and you had faith in love back then  
I know what went wrong, it won't happen again  
And you know it too, I can tell by your eyes  
Yeah I could always tell by your eyes

And there is reason for your fear  
But if you lend me your keys  
I will make it all clear  
I am down on my knees  
Yeah, I am down on my knees

### **Someday**

Don't hold me like that  
So tight I can't breathe  
I know what you want  
Can't you see what I need?  
You have to let go  
Though you want me to stay  
When you hold me like that  
All you do, is push me away

It's never enough  
I miss you too much  
I hold you for a day  
but then burn for your touch  
The hours you're away  
Are scraping me raw  
I don't understand  
What I'm doing so wrong

There's a dream I have  
You and me down by the river

Painted gold in the sunlight  
And everything's all right  
Someday  
We'll feel love without darkness  
We'll sleep when the sun sets  
And we'll stop writing the same songs over and over again

So I am the ghost  
Of your memory, your past  
I am the reason  
Why you'll never last  
I am the person you thought that you knew  
I am the dream that went spoiled and never came true

This is our story  
This is our curse  
This is what's better  
And this is what's worse  
This is what's right  
And this is what's wrong  
This is a home for a heart, where it can not belong

There's a dream I have  
You and me down by the river  
Painted gold in the sunlight  
And everything's all right  
Someday  
We'll feel love without darkness  
We'll sleep when the sun sets  
And we'll stop writing the same songs over and over again

### **Pocket**

#### **CHORUS**

Keep her in my pocket  
Keep her at my side  
Close the door and lock it  
Don't let her run and hide

At night I go to sleep and I pray I don't wake up  
This mountain is too steep and the river's all dried up  
All I do is worry, put my mind at ease  
Please be in a hurry, I am down upon my knees

#### **CHORUS**

Time will be the end, lord, of everything I am  
You used to be my friend lord, and now you leave me damned  
She is what I need lord, I'd hate to let her go  
This love is just a weed, lord, and still I let it grow

#### **CHORUS**

### **Crazy In Love Gardner**

Wish you'd be jealous, just this once  
Wish you'd act crazy, so crazy in love  
You're so calm and so cool  
Yeah you're nobody's fool  
But I wish, you'd be crazy, in love

I wish you'd show up, wherever I go  
Tell me you love me, stop assuming I know  
Then drive through the rain  
Just to tell me again  
Say you're crazy, so crazy, in love

I wish you'd be desperate, 'stead of always so calm  
If you can take it or leave it, I may as well just be gone  
I need you to need me  
Like I need eyes to see  
I wish, you'd be crazy, for me

Now I'm laying alone in this bed here tonight  
How I wish you'd come knockin', and turn on the light  
Kiss me til I know  
That you'll never let go  
Oh I wish, you'd be crazy.  
I wish you'd be crazy  
I wish.  
You'd be crazy  
In love

### **Let Me Die In Your Arms**

#### **CHORUS**

Let me die in your arms  
Let me drown in your charms  
Let's get married and buy ourselves a farm  
Oh let me die in your arms

I love you babe, more than I should  
And anything I'm singin' you could sing it just as good  
And what we have is something, yeah that's clearly understood  
So I don't see why you have to go

#### **CHORUS**

Babe, we've been together through thick and through thin  
And time is our worst enemy, always tryin' to do us in  
But we've never been afraid of it, though it might be a sin  
It's never stopped our love before

#### **CHORUS**

Babe you're all I dream about, and all I'm hoping for  
You gave me your spare key, now I can't find the door  
Yeah I think that we should get away, the world is ours to ignore  
Just say the word, and we'll be gone

#### **CHORUS**

### **I'd Rather Be Gardner**

I'd rather be some nameless fisherman  
Lost on the cold dark sea  
Than waste my time waiting for love  
From a man who's grown tired of me

I'd rather ride, that lonesome railroad  
Steam and coal dust in my eyes  
Than feel my bed getin' colder  
Than the snow falling on the pines

Like a tree grown too close to the ocean  
I have watched love wither away  
The wind will dry... my tears as I go and  
I won't think of you someday

So let me be just a beggar  
With nothing left to lose  
I won't hold tight to a memory  
And a man who won't ever be true

## CHORUS

### Note

Think about it for a while  
You'll thank me when you do  
Yeah that's what she told me  
When I was about to jump into you

And now I'm miserable **just the same**  
'Cept I'm with her instead  
And now I'm wondering what the weather's like  
Inside of your head

Does it snow? Does it rain?  
Has the sun set on your memory, has the moon brought back the pain?  
And are you cold? Do you need my coat?  
Do you still sing? Cause I need your note

And time is torture to my brain  
Weeds growing everywhere  
I feel like an empty garden  
With no one to water me, or care

And she is like my hurricane  
Yeah she's left me without a home  
And I try to call you up again  
But you do not answer your telephone

Are you busy? Are you still mad?  
Has the ringing made you weary, has the silence made you sad?  
And are you cold? Do you need my coat?  
Do you still sing? Cause I need your note

There's a fire burning in my heart  
And I'm still learning where to start  
To tell you that I need you more  
Than I thought I could

Are your thoughts still on me?  
'Cause I do not expect them all to be  
But I'm still cold, and I lost that coat  
Do you still sing? Cause I need your note  
It went oooooooooo

### You Remind Me

You remind me  
Of what I'm trying to forget  
All the love I lost  
And the things I can't admit

You remind me  
Of this old song I used to know  
The one I left behind  
And now it's everywhere I go

## CHORUS

Can you hear that sound?  
Can you hear that sound?  
Can you hear that song?  
With the beatin' of my heart keepin' time, just singin' along

You remind me  
Of a carnival ride  
When you're through, my head is spinning

I got nothin' left to hide

You remind me  
Of the train passing by  
Hummin' sweet and low  
Rollin' across the mountainside

CHORUS x2

**Nothing Left**

He's got nothing left to hide  
Nothing left inside  
Bottle on the floor  
Black roses on the door

Winter creeping in  
Colder than it's been  
Candles all burned down  
With no one else around

CHORUS-

I don't know how it got bad  
I don't know how long he's been gone  
Did he know the love he once had?  
Was she there with a shoulder to lean on?

Scattered dreams come and go  
Dream an easy plateau  
Where everything is green  
And the clouds aren't so mean

She is dancing with him  
As the sunlight starts to dim  
Stars come out to play  
As the night falls from the day

CHORUS

I tried all I could to save him  
He would not let go of me, so you see  
He could never fall to sleep  
My love was not enough

Nothing left to hide  
Nothing left on the inside  
He took the pills that she gave  
Now there's one black rose at the foot of his grave

**Better Days**

It's a bad night  
And I don't wanna think  
You're all mixed up  
But you don't wanna drink

You don't need the alcohol  
Because you're not afraid to fall  
You're just scared to get back up again

It's the wrong time  
And I don't know what's right  
Should I stay?  
Or run away into the cold dark night?

You invite me to your bed  
You want me too, that's what you said

But I can feel you pull away from me

#### CHORUS

Demons try to bring you down  
Hard to breathe, easy to drown  
Jaded in the same old ways  
But bad nights lead to better days

It's a hard life  
Though I'm not one to say  
Yeah, I've been lucky  
And once or twice I've had my way

But you're just giving in to me  
And that's not love, oh don't you see?  
Love is real, it's not for free  
I'll pay the price, just stay with me

#### CHORUS

#### **I Feel Like Dancin'**

I wanna see you tonight  
With big old hearts dancing in our eyes  
I wanna see you tonight  
Just because

Everything I do with you  
Is the best that I can do  
And the heart I seem to have  
Is beating faster than it was

I wanna be the one  
To make you feel alright  
Even though sometimes I'm the one  
That makes you sad

Everything I do with you  
Reflects the pain that we once knew  
But mostly it reflects the love  
And so I'm glad

Cause oh I feel like dancing  
On the porch outside the door  
I love the way you move across the floor  
And the way you shine  
And the fact that you're mine  
And as for music we can't hear a thing  
But the song in our hearts and the night birds singing ooooh