



Brett Dennen **"So Much More"** Dualtone Records

First, let's talk about the voice. It's unusual. Dennen is twenty-eight years old, but still sounds [vocally] like an adolescent. Almost fifty-minutes in duration, the ten-song **"So Much More"** is his sophomore solo recording. I've been through this disc, at least four times over, and Brett isn't delivering any attention grabbing stories – the historically based political comments he makes in "I Asked When" probably come closest. While love most certainly crosses his mind, thankfully, he isn't a 'spoon, moon and june' or 'oh woe is me' guy [not in the case of love, at least] – mind you, *"Have you've ever been loved by such a charismatic fool, I'm a sucker for your love"* comes close. Song-on-song there are segments where his mind [and focus] appear to stray, resulting in a stream of consciousness lyrical approach that borders on the irrelevant. Sure he delivers images, hints at possibilities, but ultimately there's no cohesion or crystal clear conclusions that you can grasp. And grasp firmly. I'm sure Dennen will find a fan base, but I can't see him making headway with the forty plus demographic. In the press sheets and on his web site, jam music has been quoted as an element in Dennen's repertoire.....the words to "She's Mine" certainly adopt the aforementioned stream of consciousness approach – the melody rambles as well.

In the opening two cuts "Ain't No Reason" and "There Is So Much More," on occasions, there's the impression that Dennen is bearing the weight of the world's woes on his shoulders – sic. '[financial] debt, prison, bombs, lying politicians' appear in the former, and in the latter 'he has witnessed people in pain, suffering, and depressed.' The chorus hook in "Ain't No Reason" being *"Love will come set me free, I do believe. I know it will, love will come set me free."* There's a Paul Simon **"Graceland"** era feel to the guitar sound on "Darlin' Do Not Fear," featuring the oft repeated *"Darlin' do not you fear what you don't really know."* Really!

There's something about the sound and feel of "Because You Are A Woman" that suggests that it's late at night, "The One Who Love You The Most" is mundane, while "When You Feel It" initially reprises those West African Simon rhythms, then degenerates at the close into a soul music workout replete with sixties Motown style, chirping female chorus. Brett reprises his 'woeful weight of the world' approach on the penultimate "So Long Sweet Misery," and then closes with "Someday" – *"Someday I'll make my great escape."* Regarding the **"So Much More"** lyrics, three words feature far too often.....far less "I," "me" and "mine" would have helped.

The session players include guitarist Mark Goldenberg [Cretones, Jackson Browne], pedal steel player Greg Leisz [Funky Kings, Dave Alvin], keyboard player Scott Thurston [Tom Petty], solo artist and slide guitar exponent Keb Mo' and backing vocalists Perla Batalla and Jennifer Grais – both recording artists in their own right. The collection was produced by bass-man Kevin McCormick [Jackson Browne, Melissa Etheridge]. When compared with recent album releases by Rosanne Cash, Guy Clark and John Flynn, as a songwriter Dennen still has a long, long, long row to hoe.....relative to the foregoing releases **"So Much More"** pales into insignificance.

Folkwax Score 6/7 out of 10 – I can't decide!!!! 6.50?

**Arthur Wood.**

Kerrville Kronikles 08/06.