



Martyn Joseph **"Whoever It Was That Brought Me Here Will Have To Take Me Home"** Pipe Records

Thirteen words, or alternatively forty-nine alphabetic letters, must surely make this the longest album title ever to have been reviewed in Folkwax, to date. Welsh born, Joseph, is a singer/songwriter who has displayed leanings on past recordings toward spiritually slanted lyrics. The nine songs in this collection are secular in tone apart from the one cover song. A quartet of the other songs were co-written with Scouse poet and long established collaborator, Stewart Henderson. Born in Liverpool circa, 1952, Henderson's family roots originate in Scotland.

The album opens with one of the aforementioned collaborations, "Love Is" [also the name of Kim Casali's world famous cartoon that has been syndicated worldwide in newspapers for over three decades], and lyrically it runs out as little more than a shopping list of the events that come with the territory known as a *relationship*. The cover is Bebo Norman's "Where The Angels Sleep," a love song that's riddled with uncertainty as penned by a thirty something – *"It's taken ten thousand days, To get stuck in my ways."* Born Stephen Norman in Columbus, Georgia in May 1973, Bebo was Christian music's best-selling new artist in Europe in 2000. Currently Bebo records for the nationally distributed Christian label, Watershed/Essential, and the song first appeared on his 1999 release **"Ten Thousand Days."**

"Wake Me Up" is a paean to the act of staying alert, aware and not being taken in by the bright lights. According to the narrator, the latter road leads to apathy, *"Flashing lights and jamboree, Baby the world drains the life out of me"* being the pivotal couplet. Pursuing further the relationship theme, "Every Little Sign," another Joseph/Henderson collaboration, explores one in crisis, at least, it appears, from the female perspective, as the male narrator woefully adds *"There's question marks between us"* and *"Those nights when we were lovers have makes us distant friends."* One song that possesses real potency on this collection is, "This Being Woman," the third co-write. The life story of a woman, now in her twilight years and alone, is reprised across seven verses and a repeating chorus. The lyric ends with an all embracing reflection upon what has gone before – *"The role of mother, friend and wife, This gallery of all your life."* What makes this work all the more extraordinary is that it's the work of two men, albeit that the narrative piece that inspired it was written by Henderson.

Martyn's "Strange Kind Of Friend," is that all too common facet of everyday life in Britain, the rain. Not unlike Mickey Newbury, Joseph even uses a soundtrack of falling rain to bookend the cut. There's even a thematic hint of "Wake Me Up" in "Strange Kind Of Friend," in the lines *"You can ride down this road of great mystery, Or fall asleep at the wheel."* "Walk Down The Mountain" was, in part, inspired by the experiences of mountaineer Beck Weathers who was left for dead on Everest during May 1996, in an expedition that saw nine other climbers perish. In a coma at one point, Weathers, managed to walk off the mountain, although in the process of reaching safety frostbite claimed his hands and part of his face. A non-specific lyric takes Weathers' feat of survival and applies it universally to the overcoming of the many challenges that life casts in our path.

The penultimate cut "Just Like The Man Said," draws quotes from some of Joseph's favourite authors and songwriters and marries them into the lyric. In the latter vein there's *"History will slaughter us"* from political journalist John Pilger's book **"The New Rulers Of the World"** [ISBN 185984412X], while U2 supplied *"Walk on,"* Springsteen *"Guard your dreams and visions"* and Martyn even finds space for Seeger's time worn catchphrase *"We shall overcome."* The album closes with the final co-write, and

album title song. It's set in a bar at closing time, and comments upon all the mayhem that ensues when those establishments close for the day. In reality the lyric is a commentary upon the current state of society, worldwide. Joseph feels that while the clock continues to tick, there's time to *wake up* and *wise up*. As if to hint at what may lie around the corner, in the third verse, paraphrasing Dylan [forty years on], the narrator intones, "*Those masters of war never did go away.*"

Folkwax Rating 6 out of 10

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 01/04 & 02/04