



Bruce Robison **"The New World"** Premium Records

Following last year's mini collection **"It Came From San Antonio,"** Austin, Texas based Bandera bred hit songwriter Bruce Robison returns with his first full album – on his own label, Premium Records - since **"Eleven Stories"** his 2006 outing on the short-lived Kerrville, Texas imprint Sustain Records.

On this ten song collection Robison assumes a number of intriguing musical disguises, so it's little wonder that his songs have in the past attracted chart acts such as Faith Hill & Tim McGraw, George Strait and the Dixie Chicks. A funky beat underpins album opener "The Hammer," while, propelled by Andrew Nafziger's banjo, Mickey Rafael's harmonica and Paul English's snare drum, the bluegrass flavoured "Only" is a wordy tour de force wherein the song title references the 'girl' that the narrator finally settled down with. "Bad Girl Blues" paints the portrait of a wayward small town run-around, who sums up her life with *"Wish I could have been the bridesmaid, instead of always the bride."*

The label on the bottle read "California 85," and of the contents Bruce sings *"I recommend the California 85, it was the only thing that once kept me alive"* and then, pointedly, adds *"So try the California 85, it goes well with her lies."* Ever since Roger McGuinn/Jacque Levy's "Chestnut Mare" I've been a sucker for equine themed songs, and tinged with a degree of pathos the folk flavoured "Larosse" most certainly measures up to the former. The only horse his daughter would ride - *"No sir, she caught the fever and died"* - the distraught narrator seeks to part company with *"this old horse."* Starting at \$50, by the close the price has dropped to \$10 – *"That's the deal get him out of my sight."* Co-written with steel guitarist/sidekick Marty Muse, "The New One" is a happy go lucky number wherein the obviously smitten narrator processes that his latest girl is like no other. But has he found the love of his life?

The drum intro to the energetic "Twistin'" reprises Chubby Checker's 1961 hit "Let's Twist Again," while the storyline features a girl who didn't care much for small talk, and simply loved to dance – 24/7, as the exhausted narrator quickly discovers to his cost. Session guitarist Kevin McKinney penned the waltz paced ballad "Hanging On Hopeless," the tale of a woman encountering hard times. "She Don't Care" finds the narrator rejected in the love stakes, while the principle characters in the closing cut, "Echo," are a miner owner's daughter and a restless wandering farm boy who find love 'in the shadows.' Decades later, having married another woman, the farm boy continues to cherish his memory of the raven haired "Echo."

Curiously, hot on the heels of the subjectively varied and rather tuneful **"The New World,"** early next year Robison will release the ten-song, collection of hits **"His Greatest."** Rather than being a compilation of old recordings, Robison has adopted the premise that his songs are 'living, evolving entities' and as such the disc contains newly recorded interpretations.

Folkwax Score 8 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 11/08.