



Danny Schmidt **"Parables & Primes"** Live Once Records

"Parables & Primes" is Danny Schmidt's fourth solo recording, and we last featured this Texan in FolkWax back in 2002 when we reviewed his sophomore solo outing **"Enjoying The Fall."** In those days Schmidt was based in Charlottesville, Virginia, but in 2003 he returned to his hometown of Austin. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines "parables" as an allegory or a tale, while "primes" could, I guess, be interpreted as an introduction.

Schmidt engages the 'it never goes away' issue of mortality in the eerie sounding opening number "This Too Shall Pass." Post 2003 Danny had to deal with a health issue, and at the outset of the song he issues a caution regarding the end of mortality and the onset of eternity - *"Who can tell, when the clock strikes twelve"* - following which the lyric proceeds to reflect on some of the 'positives' and 'negatives' of this life - faith, the joy of friendship, the speeding [nay accelerating] passage of time, the wondrous riches of this planet, debilitation through illness and more. Danny closes by the 'parallel reference' to an old fairy tale wherein a *"king that always felt too high and then he felt too low"* seeks assistance for his malady. The waltz paced "Neil Young" amount to a two-fold allusion - firstly, a fondness for the songs penned by the Canadian, and, secondly, the love of a *"beautiful and kind"* woman. By way of describing the latter Schmidt wrote, *"the harvest is there in my arms."* Sad, bitter and alone at the outset, *"his princess long and lost,"* the mythical "Dark-Eyed Prince" builds a castle, sans any doorway and then fills *"...the moat with crocodile tears and other tricks."* In the ensuing verses of this [at times lyrically amusing] poetic reference to the human condition of 'building protective walls,' employing the dark of night, having demolished his stronghold, repeatedly the prince sallies forth, retreats his search fruitless, then he builds another castle.

Incongruity appears to be at play in "Happy All The Time," as, of his forest home, the narrator - *"I lived inside a log"* - paints in word, line and verse countless reasons for his endless joy, yet the jazzy sounding trumpet led melody hints at irony. The waltz paced "Riddles & Lies" is a call for personal openness and honesty in relationships, that chides *"...the games that we play, they're so carefully staged,"* while "Esmee By The River," which immediately follows, is full of delicate images and serves as a tender remembrance of love.

In my life there have been 'special' songs, the where and when of their first hearing I will remember as long as I draw breath. "Stained Glass" is latest addition to that select category. In the latter case, it was shortly after noon on Saturday 26th May at Threadgill Theatre during this year's Kerrville Folk Festival New Folk Songwriting Final. Schmidt, the first performer in this year's event, established a practically unassailable standard with the already evaluated "This Too Shall Pass" followed by the nearly seven minute long "Stained Glass." While Danny was a clear winner from the get-go in my book, my reservations related to the length of the latter song - *"would the contest judges deem it over long?"* As it transpired, Schmidt was rightfully one of this year's 'chosen sextet.' In terms of storyline "Stained Glass" poetically tells of the destruction and resurrection of a window that depicts the Crucifixion. While the four-minute plus Prologue recounts how the window was broken and the manner of its 'flawed' repair, the ensuing two-minute Epilogue is blisteringly honest as it reflects how we humans choose to live our lives in God's creation.

A Death Row inmate, deserted husband and the murderer of his wife's lover, is the 'eve of execution' narrator of "Ghosts." Referencing his 'conscience' this soon to be ghost relates, *"I got what I deserved a thousand times again."* "Beggars & Mules" a eulogy the life of the travelling troubadour, includes the acerbic line *"I'd heard enough of Nashville to give a happy man the blues,"* while I'm certain you'll grasp the sad reality that inspired "A Circus Of Clowns" simply from the opening verse quote *"The day the*

circus came to town half the town rejoiced, The other half was sick in bed - they were sure they'd lost their voice." No? OK, once again referencing 'the circus' how about "*With pie on their faces, and with riddles on their lips*"? OK, now you got it! Schmidt wraps up this collection with a 'stripped bare' voice and guitar rendition of "Parables & Primes," a rather poetic marriage of reality and whimsy.

Folkwax Score 9 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

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