

Already, another album featuring Michael Peter Smith

We reviewed Michael Peter Smith's new album OLD MAN DANCING in this year's March/April issue, awarding it the maximum five stars. Hot on its heels we have the pretty much self-explanatory SONGS OF A CATHOLIC CHILDHOOD, his third collaborative release credited to Michael and singer/songwriter Jamie O'Reilly. Smith was brought up in post-WWII New Jersey, while in Jamie's liner notes the Crystal Lake, Illinois raised musician admits she's a *baby boomer*. Both now reside in Chicago and this sixty-five minute long, engaging marriage of original and cover songs and stories was recorded during a live performance of SONGS OF A CATHOLIC CHILDHOOD at the city's Chief O'Neill's Pub. O'Reilly (vocals) and Smith (vocals, acoustic guitar) are supported by John Abbey (bass).

Smith's name is appended (as composer) to half-a-dozen songs. There's the familiar and slyly worded *Sister Clarissa* and the more recent *Sure Has Grown*, while the rib-tickling *Pagan Children*, to which Jamie added some of the lyrics, is new. A composer in her own right, O'Reilly delivers *Transfiguration*. As for the other musical fare on offer, it ranges from the thirteenth century and St. Thomas Aquinas' *Tantum Ergo* to the one just passed and *Bells Of St. Mary's* (featured in the 1945 Crosby/Bergman movie) plus Jenny and Lennie's *Song Of Bernadette*. In terms of concept O'Reilly and Smith's SONGS OF A CATHOLIC CHILDHOOD pursues the spirit of the latter's classic reminiscence MICHAEL, MARGARET, PAT & KATE (1994). Essential.

Arthur Wood.

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