



Si Kahn “We’re Still Here” Strictly Country Records

Born April 23rd in Boston, Massachusetts, Kahn recorded this album, in three days in Holland – some of the cuts were recorded *in concert*, in celebration of his sixtieth birthday. If you check the Si Kahn biography located elsewhere on the Folkwax site, you’ll find in the closing sentence that I wrote.....*music continues to be a sideline for him*. For all of his adult life, since graduating from Harvard, Kahn has been a union organiser [of blue collar unions, civil rights and more] and an *occasional musician*.

In a recording career that now spans three decades “**We’re Still Here**” is Kahn’s twelfth album, and he penned all the songs apart from Pete Seeger’s translation of Slovak Andrew Kovaly’s “He Lies In The American Land,” the latter being the tale of a husband and father who dies alone in a foreign land attempting to make a better life for his family. “Hiway 9,” the opening track on Eliza Gilkyson’s “**Land Of Milk And Honey**” is a stinging indictment of the present American administration, and the opening song here, “Hard Times,” finds Kahn verbally chastising those who were elected to serve [in 2000] for widening the gap between rich and poor. As for the ordinary man, Kahn attests in the closing verse “*We are born to work and choose.*” And this November Americans have the opportunity, once again, to choose.....to re-elect those hell bent upon governing by financial self-interest, or those who will serve the nations’ people – rich and poor.

“Traveller” is a song about journeying through life with a faithful companion and in the liner Khan dedicates the song to his wife Elizabeth Minnich, while the “The Flume [Down The Road],” which follows, is a song about a flood in 1915 that effectively ruined a logging area, portrayed from the viewpoint of a family who earned its livelihood from the trade. While the fourth cut “Mother Jones’ Farewell To Ireland” captures the moment she discovered true love in *the new world*, the closing cut “Mother Jones’ Farewell [I Was There]” describes this famous radical’s subsequent life of dedication, during which she “*Stood against the rich and greedy, For the workers and the poor.*” “We’re Still Here” is based upon a recollection of the once mighty steel mills that used to employ a significant proportion of the population in Youngstown, Pennsylvania. The mills are now closed, and the people who still reside there have to find a way to live, survive even.

In fact many of the nineteen songs featured are founded upon themes associated with the life of the blue collar worker - “Silk And Satin” [child labour], “We Roll Steel” [the workers from all over the world who came to labour in the mills of Baltimore], “The Whiskey Ring And The Railroad Trust” [the seemingly eternal financial divide between the rich and poor], “Wigan Pier” [the closure of coalmines in the UK], or the *insatiable greed* of the *fat-cat* few who have, and the multitude who have not - “The Gap [\$8,825 An Hour].” “Cam Ranh Bay” reflects the thoughts, and subsequent breakdown, of a young soldier [“17 years old”] sent to fight for his country in a foreign land, while “When The War Is Done” focuses upon the aftermath. As for America’s social mores among many facets associated with the use of guns “The Hunters” features humorous commentary on that nation’s penchant for killing [all forms of life], while “Rabbit Jim” features a character that was the antithesis of the latter *life-form*.

Considering that Kahn has dedicated his life to improving the life of the socially deprived, it’s hardly surprising that his song publishing company is called Joe Hill Music.

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood
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