



## Kelly Willis **"Translated From Love"** Rykodisc Records

Five years ago Willis cut the acoustic guitar rich **"Easy"** which she co-produced with Gary Paczosa [Alison Krauss, Dixie Chicks, Dolly Parton], and now returns with the electric guitar driven, Chuck Prophet produced **"Translated From Love."** Prophet played guitar on **"What I Deserve"** [1999] and the aforementioned Y2K + 2 outing. Kelly married Texas bred singer/songwriter Bruce Robison back in 1996 and the couple's first child, Deral Otis, was born during January 2001. Since **"Easy"** the ensuing years have been something of a 'pregnant pause' for this Oklahoma born songbird marked by the arrival of the twins Abigail Esme and Benjamin James in 2002, and Joseph Willis in January 2006.

Although she had no new material 'to hand,' Willis contacted Prophet during the summer of 2006 and this twelve-song collection was recorded later that year in Bruce's home studio. Prophet apart the session players were Greg Leisz [guitar, pedal steel, banjo], Marc Pisapia [drums], John Ludwick [bass], Michael Hardwick [dobro] and Michael Ramos [keyboards, accordion]. Bruce Robison pitches in with a couple of harmony vocals, as do 'local boys' The Gourds and singer/songwriter Jules Shear [he wrote and co-wrote a number of the songs], plus there are cello, viola and violin contributions from the Austin based Tosca String Quartet.

Austin based writer Damon Bramlett scores a couple of **"Translated From Love"** cuts, and the album opens with his up-tempo galactic themed "Nobody Wants To Go To The Moon Anymore." Willis and Prophet collaborated on penning six numbers, three with other scribes – those cuts explore the ups and downs in male/female relationships – so it's a sad case of subjectively 'pretty much the same.' The duo's opening gambit "Sweet Little One" is followed by the Willis/Prophet/Shear collaboration "Don't Know Why." Early in her career, musically speaking, Willis was a rockabilly kind of girl and the Adam Green [ex-Moldy Peach] tune "Teddy Boys" is a fond backward glance. Green included the song on his 2005 album **"Gemstones."**

Greg Leisz picks banjo and plays pedal steel, plus the Tosca String Quartet weigh in on the mid-tempo Willis/Prophet tune "Losing You," while, featuring Bruce Robison on harmony vocal, the pace slows for Willis, Prophet and Shear's "Too Much To Lose." Next up is Shear's "The More I'm Around You" which first appeared on his Y2K Rounder/Zoe release **"Allow Me."** Damon Bramlett's second contribution "Sweet Sundown" is followed by a cut from Iggy Pop's **"Lust For Life"** [1977]. Featuring a sarcastic Iggy lyric and music by David Bowie and his one time sideman Ricky Gardiner, "Success" is definitely *The Joker* in this pack. The latter includes typically rowdy and wayward vocal contributions from The Gourds, while Michael Ramos plays a cheesy sounding San Antonio organ [think Augie Meyers and Sir Douglas Quintet].

Greg Leisz pitched in with Willis 'n' Prophet on penning the country blues waltz "Stone's Throw Away." The latter prominently features the Tosca String Quartet and Leisz's pedal steel. Loaded with Texas twang, Michael Hardwick's dobro can be heard on the penultimate "I Must Be Lucky." A road song of sorts it was penned by Willis/Prophet/Shear. Stephen Yerkey is a West Virginia bred, San Francisco based musician and the album closer "Translated From Love" appeared on his 2006 sophomore release **"metaneonatureboy."**

There's some great picking, bowing and strumming by the sessions players, and Willis still possesses one of *'the voices,'* it's just that the material.....well, it's just that same ole love theme if you know what I mean!

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

**Arthur Wood.**

Kerrville Kronikles 07/07.