



Bob Hillman "**Welcome To My Century**" Brave New Records

Bob's sophomore solo disc opens with a *thrash and crash* rendition of the album title track. As for Hillman's obtuse lyrics, all that I can pick out is that some *grown-up kid* [obviously lacking gonads and a single self-sufficient thought or action] remains financially dependent upon his alcoholic father. They're co-dependent? As for the "*face-lift mothers*" and "*eighteen holes*" at "*the country club*," are they relevant to some well-hidden story line or just sarcasm? There's a significant reduction in pace for "Valentine's Day" and even a discernible melody, which is underpinned once more by electric guitar [which occasionally chimes], as Bob warbles about "*Valentine's Day, Mighty big hurt*" and "*this is how it is, me and my accomplices*." If the *hurt* incurred was so *big*, why does the narrator go on to acclaim enthusiastically "*here is everything*" in relation to broken-down bars, circle of friends and rock-and-roll stars? What does this guy really want? Of course I could have totally missed Bob's irony!

In "Games" Hillman lists further personal insecurities. It appears that he's afraid of "*losing at games, going bald, getting sick and losing you*." I guess the *big hurt* would come with the latter loss, but I'm already thinking "*Do I really care?*" Apart from highlighting its administrative autonomy from Denmark and a high literacy rate, the punch line in "Greenland" appears to be that his current girlfriend only wants to talk about psychology, while maintaining a [physical] relationship that is "*twice as cold as Greenland*." If "*give me a lover who would rather build a fire*" is what Bob really needs, why didn't he simply move on and not bother writing the song. Supposedly, there was a tongue-in-cheek aspect to the aforementioned song – frankly, it was so transparent!

The sound the electric instruments, the drumming [ala The Beatles and everything after] and the multi-layering of the vocals on "Movie Star," marks the cut out as what was once [laughably] dubbed by the industry as power-pop. In fact much of the album follows this generic sound pattern, and relative to the *broad church of Folkwax*, there's nothing here that is truly acoustic folk or even folk rock. It all sounds good, is well recorded – hell it darned well should, considering producer Tommy West's impeccable [history and folk-rock] credentials. Frankly, there's so much production on these songs, that this is a pop-rock album. As for Hillman's lyrics, apart from an occasional clever use of a word or catch-phrase, there's little to sustain repeated listening to this collection.

Note.

By way of a cross reference to my Christine Lavin album review which appears elsewhere in this issue of Folkwax, Hillman contributed two songs, "Communists" and "World Trade Center," to the twenty track "**Vigil**" CD. Produced by Suzanne Vega and The Greenwich Village Songwriter's Exchange it will benefit the Widows Of Hope Family Relief Fund.

Folkwax Rating 5 out of 10

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