

## Boo Hewerdine - GOD BLESS THE PRETTY THINGS (Navigator 11)

At the risk of damning with predictable praise, I'll venture the opening comment that what we have here is everything we'd expect from this delightful songwriter: eleven songs of subtle beauty that drift genially into the consciousness and then leave it again making a telling (though sometimes deceptively slight) impression.

That quality of ephemerality, though undeniably part of the attraction of Boo's music, may well be a contributing factor, if not the principal reason why he remains on the margin of wider commercial success.

No matter, for this (Boo's fourth full solo album - not counting last year's pair of charming Toy Box EPs) is well up to the standard of previous works, if not actually eclipsing them.

He's joined here by John Douglas, Gustav Ljunggren, Ewen Vernal, Stephen Douglas, Alan Kelly and Heidi Talbot, with appearances from John McCusker, Roy Dodds, Kevin McGuire and Justin Currie: a large cast-list, but textures are deft, precise and brilliantly sparing at all times, ideally suiting the laid-back gentility of Boo's own voice and guitar and enabling close-to-total concentration on Boo's unassumingly intelligent lyrics (which should by rights be part of the CD package but frustratingly they're not).

Yet, whatever the content of Boo's songs, however downbeat or melancholy their message (as in the forlorn New Year's Eve), the overall impact is almost always soothing and calming - an effect accentuated by the pastel shades of the accompanying instrumentation and the relaxed, effortless quality of his singing. Its understatement strikes a chord in the listener and it's all strangely addictive, but don't expect any thrusting emoting or thrashing tempos! Each song is a perfectly crafted jewel, even if most of Boo's creations take a few plays to wind their way into your head. Here on this typically title-track-less offering,

Boo easily delivers wistful road-songs like *Geography* (complete with lovely harmonies from Heidi) and reflections of longing (*Muddy Water*) that lead to the homecoming of *Sleeping Lions*. Later, slivers of chummy advice (*Soul Mate*, which also recalls the insouciance of Kevin Ayers' *May I*) balance the poignancy of the tender love-song *You And Me* that functions as the album closer. Boo's gently torchy side surfaces briefly on *Rags* (which stops just this side of Rufus Wainwright), *It's A Beautiful Night*, the cod-café-chanson *In Paris After The War*, and best of all the sensuous *Silver Wings*.

Yes, another fine album from Boo that will give a great deal of pleasure to all who fall under its spell.

<http://www.myspace.com/boohewerdine>

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