

Gurf Morlix – LAST EXIT TO HAPPYLAND
(Own Label, no catalogue number)



The mighty “adopted Texan” Gurf Morlix, perhaps best feted as veteran sideman and guitarist for Lucinda Williams over a span of eleven years, has also worked with virtually everyone of note in the roots/Americana/country business, from Tom Russell to Warren Zevon, Mary Gauthier to Slaid Cleaves.

But in more recent times Gurf’s enjoyed an increasingly healthy profile in his own right, culminating earlier this year in a stunning live appearance on the Bob Harris radio show followed by a sellout gig at this year’s Celtic Connections festival. Last Exit To Happyland turns out to be his fifth solo album (where the hell have the other four gotten lost?!); it shows him to be a singer, songwriter and performer of striking individuality and character.

The album’s ten songs are all Gurf’s own work, two being jointly penned with George Carver; they’re steeped in roots flavours, and delivered in a strong, earthy, powerful gruff voice that sure holds your attention much in the manner of, say, Robbie Robertson.

It seems Gurf ends up playing almost every instrument you hear on the album, only yielding the drum stool to Rick Richards. Vocally, he’s joined on five songs by various outstanding female singers: he duets with Patty Griffin on three standout tracks including the sublime closer Voice Of Midnight, while Ruthie Foster “moaned and wailed” on the steamy Drums From New Orleans.

If like me you love that shadowy musical hinterworld where deep roots and country meets swamp-jive and blues, then you’ll warm at once to Gurf’s tasty gumbo.

Highlights for me amongst Gurf’s sharply observed, if at times laconic songs are the weather-beaten road-movie of Crossroads, the tender, atmospheric portrait of She’s A River, and the genial ragtime of Music You Mighta Made (a duet with Barbara Kooyman).

But the quality never wavers: this is an excellent, solid roots record.

<http://www.gurfmorlix.com>

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