

Philip Cockerham – WAITING FOR THE AGE OF REASON (Own Label, no catalogue number)



Based in Leeds, Philip's an accomplished musician, singer and songwriter who's always written, sung and played music, but now that his family have grown up and reached their own "age of reason", he's been able to find the time to properly address some of the issues life's raised and branch out into the acoustic folk scene with his music.

This CD covers all the relevant bases, with Philip's songs taking a wry and often edgily poignant look at aspects of life, whether his own or that around him. Here, Philip proves he has the knack of writing songs that make a point, concisely and memorably, as well as the gift for putting together attractive and unassumingly inventive musical settings that complement rather than distract. And he's an excellent singer and instrumentalist to boot, so you know you're in for an exciting ride on this batch of 14 songs (and one instrumental).

All sorts of memories and emotions are evoked in Philip's songs, and the passionate delivery, driving riffs and rock-style arrangement of My Father's Shoes make for a strong opener to the disc that's hard to follow. I'm not sure that I'm So Happy I'm A Banker fits the bill at this stage of the CD, but it's still an annoyingly catchy little commentary with which we can all totally identify. Philip then picks up the thread of memory again, tracing his life from first day at school (the appealingly 60s-styled Orange Juice And Cold Potato Stew – no, it wasn't a closet hallucinogenic!) through the thoughtful science of Bones (shades of Tim Minchin perhaps?), the cautious self-exploration of the bluesy Slow Turning Man and the plaintive, John Martyn-like Save You, through the passage of time as Philip experiences it. Magic is another of those late-60s moments distilled in rippling acoustic guitar and percussion with a glorious cello counterpoint (Carol Yeadon), while If You Take Care Of It moves effortlessly into 70s Beatles/Badfinger mode.

The more introspective moments also score through their aptly simple expression of often complex emotional states, and what shines through powerfully is Philip's overriding optimism (Don't Be Blue and the wistful I Wish I'd Met Somebody, the latter being one of two songs further enhanced by a superb second guitar part from Duncan McFarlane and also sporting a delicate oboe solo from Philip's trusty keyboard). Summer Muse perfectly conveys a state of post-illness disorientation, that unsettling, itchy, desperate limbo, whereas Green Blues evokes a Jackson C. Frank or early Steve Tilston troubadour style (the delicious arrangement on this track is further evidence of Philip's acute ear for sublime textural fills and ingenious touches) and Baby Be There is infused with the spirit of indie-rock.

The all-too-brief folk-rock instrumental The Crack forms a thumping good (if distinctly McFarlane-esque) interlude before the final song, Last Orders, which closes the time-frame circle with a heartfelt portrait of Philip's grandfather, who was not only a proud soldier but a hero in so many other ways too.

Yes, this CD is sheer quality through and through, and richly repays both your initial investment and many repeated plays. I foresee we'll be hearing a lot more of Mr Cockerham in the future.

By the way, Philip has also produced a brilliant Christmas charity CD, Hard World – Songs For Peace, all profits from the sale of which will go to Help For Heroes.

It contains three tracks, including Phil's popular gig-closing anthem All Pull Together and the seasonal 100 New Year Promises; sporting a really attractive cover design by artist Bruce Wilson (who'd played some cracking electric guitar on the Reason CD), it sells for just £2.

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