

Roy Bailey - BELOW THE RADAR (Fuse CFCD. 407)



Well, Roy's "retirement" CD, *Coda*, was actually meant to be his last recording wasn't it?!... but then along came *Sit Down And Sing...* And then, as we all know, far from retiring into a frail shell, Roy's continued to stimulate and inspire us all through his passionate live performances, unflinchingly discovering and bringing onto stage (and thus into richly deserved wider circulation) great new songs that challenge and provoke in the best possible traditions of folk, confronting our preconceptions and beliefs for there are many lessons still to be learnt.

So I guess a further release was inevitable! Hence the so-aptly titled new CD, which firmly casts the spotlight of destiny on folk songs which (in Roy's own brilliantly chosen words) "circulate unhindered by the formulaic demands of commercialism, their strength (lying) in their being outside the mainstream - from being below the radar". And let me say at the outset that it finds Roy on finest possible form: at 73, still singing with deep and natural compassion and a tremendous intensity and conviction.

Roy's renewed vigour is the stuff of legend, but I could say it's right there in the grooves of this record for you to reach out and touch (Andy Seward has done a splendid job in capturing both the joy and strength of Roy's singing). And of course in his choice of songs: uncompromising and perennially relevant.

Pride of place this time round goes to the four stunning songs from the pen of Seattle-based Jim Page, whose effective and resonant utilisation-cum-paraphrasing of borrowings from traditional and contemporary folk songs clearly strikes a chord in Roy (while also recalling the comparable skill of our own Ray Hearne).

But Roy keenly embraces the sentiments of each and every song he sings, whether it's George Papavgeris's all-encompassing and life-affirming anthem *Friends Like These* or Ian Campbell's epic and darkly prophetic *Old Man's Tale*. Here Roy also brings us a contrasted pair of fine songs by David Ferrard: the charming love song *Take Me Out Waltzing Tonight* and the powerfully reflective album closer *Visions Of Our Youth*. Continuing Roy's own personal "tradition", there's a song apiece by Si Kahn and Leon Rosselson (well, the latter's actually Leon's setting of Charles Causley's *Timothy Winters*), while "actual" tradition is represented by a lovely version of *The Road To*

Dundee and a fine rendition of *Handsome Molly*, on which one of Roy's backing musicians is Martin Simpson, whose own recording of the song is considered a benchmark.

Roy's other instrumental collaborators here - John Kirkpatrick, Andy Cutting, Donald Grant and Andy Seward - give of their very best, playing with spirit and commitment throughout in lovingly-contoured, full-toned yet light and sensitive arrangements.

Every track is both memorable and relevant, a further demonstration of Roy's total integrity, and the whole set is both cause for celebration (of half-a-century of bringing folk music to a wide audience) and yet another high point in Roy's illustrious career.

www.roybailey.net