

FAME - Folk and Acoustic Music Exchange

March 2009

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I'm sitting here listening to Kim Richardson's *True North* album the other day and I'm thinking, hey, this is a gimme. All I have to do is list the songs and say what a swell songwriter ol' Kim is and I'm done. Then I look at the credits and, damn, who are these other people? Mary Unobsky, William Lee Ellis? Now I'm in a quandary. Admittedly, ol' Kim did write about half the songs herself, but what did the others bring to the table? Not so easy after all. There's always a catch. Oh well. Music, like baseball, is a team sport and it says right here on Kim's resume, plays well with others, so here goes...

Well, whaddya know? Turns out, she does play well with others. From the first notes on the album, that much is downright obvious. *Vinegar In Your Veins* is great pop, upbeat and sassy, with double keyboards (I love the combination of piano and organ when it's not overdone) and a chorus straight out of the late 60s or early 70s. A spit in the face of one who jilts, it is, and this guy evidently deserves it. Shudder.

One of the first CDs I reviewed for FAME was *Wide* by one Gabrielle Gewirtz, one of those hidden talents who pepper New York City with great music. I bring her up because *Cause You're Mine* has that Gabrielle touch, the vocal flow which impressed me so much back then. I've listened to hundreds of CDs since and this is the first time I've come across anyone who captures it as well. Good stuff, this. And it just gets better from there. *Bury Me in the Sky* ranks up toward the top of the Americana ballad category (which is to say it is a damn fine song in a singer/songwriter acoustic vein, which is what Americana seems to mean to many people these days). *Jump On*, upbeat and acoustically rocking, gives ol' Kim a chance to use her voice and she acquits herself nicely, vocal twists and all.

I start a new paragraph for Susan Marshall and Kim's interpretation of the outstanding *Midnight MS*. With guitar dipped in tremolo and reverb of just the right portions, this laid back account of death by drowning builds to a mini-crescendo which allows Ms. Richardson (it is now a matter of respect) room to move. She squeezes the words and notes to perfection and when the subject (er, warning: possible spoiler...uh, too late) is swept away by flood, it is music and drama making a point.

A light and rocking *Devil On a Sunday* lightens the mood a bit, a Tony Joe White-ish approach to the devil going to church with simple and totally apt acoustic slide work (ah, William Lee Ellis...now I get it). I'm guessing here, but Ms. Richardson had or at one time was a daughter (a safe bet—no odds there), and her *tribute*, *Daughter*, will pull at the heartstrings of both daughter and parent. The song is

nice, the lyrics say *it all*. *Roll the Stone Away* is simply a great song, complete with crunching (is that crunching ACOUSTIC?) guitar which offsets the melody beautifully.

Title tracks are usually that for a reason *and True North* is no exception. This is obviously a song Richardson (she has now stepped into the realm of the professional, thus the lack of formality) believes in. The power and melody of the chorus brings the verse home *nicely*. *Stop Jerkin' My Chain* shows a lighter side, guitar riffs short (too short) but spot on and then there's that ol' Sun Shuffle rhythm section. This is a crowd pleaser.

Like a good show, the CD ends with an encore *of sorts*. Virginia is quiet, personal, sad. No spoiler here. It is too personal. And a good ender.

When I heard Kim Richey's *Chinese Boxes* album, the first thing that came to mind was that if I was a musician and looking for good material, I would hijack some of hers. I feel the same about Kim Richardson. She has a good voice and a presence, but it is the song... Makes me wonder if there are any other Kims out there writing tunes. Might be something in that.
