

Mp3 Chris Floyd And Nick Kulukundis - Wheel Of Heaven



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Alt-Country, Americana 11 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Modern Country, FOLK: Modern Folk Details: Wheel of Heaven is a collection of songs by Chris Floyd, performed by Floyd and producer/arranger/multi-instrumentalist Nick Kulukundis. Below, Roal Deakins tells the story behind this unusual collaboration traditional American music infused with a modern flavor. This record was a long time coming, Chris Floyd says: about 30 years, in fact. Floyd took a winding road to music but it was with him every step of the way. His father was the songleader in a Baptist church in Watertown, Tennessee, a small town in the next county over from Nashville. Floyd grew up steeped in the cadences and melodies of country gospel. "It wasn't a holy-roller type thing," Floyd says, "but it was by no means bland or passionless. My father went at it with an almost rock-and-roll sensibility driving the songs forward, his foot pounding time, his voice charged with feeling, making every word come alive. Music was joy, music was fun but it was also life-and-death: heaven and hell hung in the balance, eternity and fate were always looming. With that kind of music, you play for keeps." But there were other sounds too. Floyd's older brothers were quintessential Sixties youth "dead cool guys, the only people around town with Nehru jackets, hipster boots, blasting Motown, Dylan, Hendrix and the blues through the house. They had their own band, too The Continental Grippe. A trippy name, but most of their songs were blues-based stuff." Floyd thought music would be his calling, but "I veered off the track somehow," he says. "I never stopped writing songs, learning songs, music always in my head. But I was the greenest of greenhorns, didn't know where to start maybe I lacked the moxie to just walk out on the street and get down to it. Anyway, other things came along, some of them important most of them not." He drifted in and out of various jobs car-washing, carpet-laying, warehouse work while drifting in and out of the university in Knoxville, where he studied Russian, religion and journalism. "I ended up working for small newspapers in Tennessee and

Mississippi, covering everything: murder trials, county fairs, shootings, house fires, car wrecks, politics and dirty pool, police raids. I went on what had to be one of the last moonshine raids in the Tennessee hills you could get liquor almost anywhere by then, but here was this guy still cooking mash in the backwoods. A real traditionalist." Eventually he ended up up in Russia, working for an English-language paper there, The Moscow Times, during the raucous heyday of the Yeltsin years. This turned out to be, in a convoluted way, the turning point on his path back to music. "I met an English girl there. She went off to Paris, I went back to Tennessee. Eventually we got married and settled in England." It was there that Floyd met Nick Kulukundis. "Nick's been making music for decades, every kind of music. He's been on the charts, off-the-wall, underground. He's the one who made this happen. I played him some of the songs I'd been writing for the desk drawer all through the years, and he saw something in them. He's got a roomful of studio gear in his farmhouse in the English countryside, so I went down there and we worked up these songs." With his arrangements and multi-instrumental work, Kulukundis "took the dry bones and made them dance," Floyd says. "He comes at it from an absolutely unique perspective. Everything I write comes ultimately out of American traditional music. I'm rooted in it, and that's good, but you can get locked into it too. Nick brings a whole other world many worlds into the mix, opens it up, keeps it alive." Wheel of Heaven is the first fruit of this unique collaboration between the wide world and the deep country, a music shot through with humor, sorrow, joy and mortality. It's fun but like the old-time Baptists, they play for keeps.

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