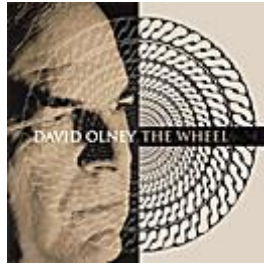


Mp3 David Olney - The Wheel



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Rusty, bluesy, Americana grit somewhere between Leonard Cohen and Townes Van Zandt. "Every song here speaks to some deep matter of the soul." - Dave Marsh 15 MP3 Songs ROCK: Americana, FOLK: Power-folk Details: "David Olney, The Wheel If a song cycle about, well, cycles sounds just a mite too conceptual for its own good, that's because you haven't heard Olney. He can bring rugged passion to even the smartest lyric. And songs such as The Girl I Love and Chained and Bound to the Wheel aren't just smart, they're wise. Olney sings masterfully, whether on the gospel cadences of Voices on the Water or the laconic folk melodies of Stonewall. At the center is the brilliant Revolution, which seems to be about something as simple as seasons - "We all believe the summer lasts forever" - but with a message that runs much deeper. Between several songs, Olney drops in little interludes that seem like half-finished motifs - and it's only until you reach the end that you realize he has been building a round. Which, of course, is a fitting way to finish the album." - Brian Mansfield, USA Today "David Olney started out being a Yankee youth and wound up living (and I think, writing) as a Southerner. Then again, he also began as a rebel, and rebels always fit in better elsewhere. Olney's best lyrics simultaneously achieve the dense, dark solemnities of Leonard Cohen and the laconic pensiveness of Townes Van Zandt, with the dry wit of Woody Guthrie sprinkled around for good measure. In fact, Olney writes so well, he presents himself with a problem: People overlook his impressive performances of all those finely wrought songs. They shouldn't. Olney never just wrote lyrics. From his days with the X-Rays, he played and sang his heart out, and although as a mature artist, he sings in more measured cadences, in this respect his heart never moved far from where it started out. The musicality of his words links him to that long great chain of the very best. On The Wheel, this reaches its height in that majestic little drama, "Revolution," which serves as a fitting sequel to John Lennon's Beatles song of the same title, as a piece of futuristic fiction, as a

modern corollary to *A Tale of Two Cities*. Placed at the exact center of the album's 15 tracks, this elusive, allusive narrative of a raging battle that engulfs all humans in its path stands as the metaphor for every song around it. "Revolution" recalls for me that brilliant moment at the very end of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Material* trilogy where humanity's prime project is defined as the creation of the Republic of Heaven. Every song here speaks to some deep matter of the soul. The first track, "Wheels," features Olney singing what sounds like the descendant of a Gothic chant, then opens up to a boisterous set of philosophical aphorisms in "Big Cadillac." "Voices on the Water" bespeaks gospel to its core, "Chained and Bound to the Wheel" evokes Prometheus and St. Catherine (and all the wheels already summoned up). "God Shaped Hole" speaks for itself, but who do you figure that Boss is who don't throw no dice? Might he be Einstein's God who does not shoot craps with the universe? As with Cohen and Pullman, and for that matter Van Zandt, Lennon and Dickens, Olney's spirituality centers on a universe governed more by love than malice, in fact more by love than any other single quality. The evocative wonder produced by "The Girl I Love" and "All the Love in the World" lies in his ability to extend that spiritual vision to all he loves. Yet while brilliantly describing the way a heavenly republic ought to work, David Olney never loses sight of the hurtful way this one operates. So the girl he loves smiles, and then she cries, and his heart quakes with the sight of the one and nearly breaks at the sight of the other. This is life not only observed but lived at the deepest level, and conveyed to everyone who hears it with commanding artistry and a vision of the biggest future there is. I feel privileged to hear it." - Dave Marsh

David Olney is a singer-songwriter. But in his case, perhaps the term should be capitalized. And maybe underlined and printed in bold type as well. To wit, the late Townes Van Zandt, a songwriting icon himself, rated Olney as "one of the best songwriters I've ever heard," listing him as one of his four favorite music writers alongside Mozart, Lightnin' Hopkins and Bob Dylan. Olney's songs have been recorded by the two singers best known for showcasing the work of the finest contemporary songwriters - Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt - and have earned him the sort of rare praise that is generally reserved for the work of geniuses. For as Dave Ferman of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram raves, "David Olney is as good as it gets. Period." For confirmation of such heady praise, one only need to turn to *The Wheel*, Olney's new release on Loud House Records and his 11th studio album. Like many Olney records, it has a thematic thread subtly weaving through the work, this time one of circularity and motion, as he explores a broad palette of modes, moods and characters that crackle with the immediacy and emotional depth of reality transformed

into music. With a musical and lyrical touch that ranges from the shattering surprise of a sucker punch to the piquant delicacy of a kiss, Olney forges the lowdown with high art within the craft of the popular song, creating virtual literature you can hum along with. Both on his own and in collaboration with folk and pop legend Janis Ian, Oscar nominee Gwil Owen and respected literary figure Bland Simpson, David Olney proves the transformational power of the well-written song. The Wheel brims with the literate vividness that has inspired critics to compare Olney alternately to an author, painter, playwright and screenwriter. "His songs are rich with complex characters, unpredictable plot twists, and grand tragedies; they dramatize the brutality of evil and the quiet dignity of goodness," wrote Michael McCall in the Nashville Scene. Similarly, Jim Ridley noted in New Country how "David Olney has a distinctly American voice. There's a swagger, a generosity and a wise-guy wit in his writing that we associate with our national character, an appreciation for the underdog and the outlaw." Philadelphia Inquirer critic Nick Christiano compares Olney to "an American Richard Thompson," observing how he "ranges from brooding chamber folk to bluesy, down-and-dirty rock while writing piercingly intelligent and empathetic tunes that immediately engage both the head and the gut." It's those qualities as well as what the Star-Telegram's Ferman calls Olney's "astounding" and "magnificent" performing style that have made Olney the toast of musical cognoscenti across North America and Europe. A longtime resident of Nashville, a songwriters' city if there ever was one, Olney was reared in Lincoln, Rhode Island. A love of musical expression came early; he recalls as a youngster the exhilaration of singing at the top of his lungs on quiet Sunday mornings as he rode his bike along his paper route. At the age of 13, he got his first guitar, and was soon digging down into the origins of contemporary American folk by listening to and learning from Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly. "Folk music was so immediate and self-contained and you could just jump in and do it," Olney recalls. But even though "folk was the way I chose to do music," at the same time Olney tapped into the broad and rich veins of musical vitality found in the 1960s. "Rock'n'roll and soul and the British Invasion and pop music in general was the background music to all our lives. After a while, it all runs together. Buddy Holly, John Lennon, Chuck Berry, the Memphis Jug Band, Charlie Poole, Jimmy Reed, Otis Redding and Bob Dylan all hit me where I live. Oh yeah, and Ray Charles. They are all folk singers. They are all rock stars." Attracted to the mysticism of the American South as a counterpoint to the Yankee rationalism of his home turf, Olney headed to the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill where his brief tenure as a student was soon overcome by the allure of making music. His college

experience did offer its creative benefits in making the acquaintance of his now longtime friend Bland Simpson, the celebrated Southern author, musician (The Red Clay Ramblers), historian and storyteller. During a subsequent stint living in Atlanta, Olney had a "world-changing moment" when he opened a show for Townes Van Zandt in nearby Athens. "His music knocked me on my ear," explains Olney. "He could write folk songs and make them contemporary; completely new. And he wasn't afraid of poetry - he was completely fearless that way." Olney eventually landed in Nashville, where he comfortably fell in with such like-minded types as Guy Clark, Steve Earle and Rodney Crowell. He chose the city for its Southern locale and the music industry there, which proved to be in an entirely different solar system from the one that Olney worked and created in. "I thought I was gonna get famous real quick and that didn't happen," he recalls. "But I was having a real good time, and I was getting real productive with my writing." Olney soon "had it in mind that would be fun to start a little band, a country and folk kind of thing. Then we played our first gig and it got real loud," he says with a laugh. The group, David Olney The X-Rays, released one superb album, *Contender*, on Rounder Records and helped jump start Nashville's non-country live music scene. After the band ran its course, Olney went solo and never looked backwards. Over what is now some two decades since of writing songs, making albums and performing, he's amassed a highly impressive and distinctive body of work. Along the way, he's inhabited in song such real life characters as Omar Khayyam, John Barrymore, T.E. Lawrence, John Dillinger, Barrabas and Jesse James as well Bob Ford, the man who shot and killed James. Likewise, Olney's creativity has crystallized such diverse points of view as the members of a baseball team at play, the donkey that carried Jesus into Jerusalem, a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly, and the sinking of the Titanic from the perspective of the iceberg. He can just as easily convey the feelings of such outsiders as drunkards, murderers, pool hustlers and gamblers as compose elegant love songs that swoon with genuine romance. And he sets it all within song structures that make such flights of imagination tangible and accessible, drawing from folk, country, blues, rock and R&B to create a rich American musical gumbo. Although Olney's musical journey has skirted along the margins of popularity and the music industry, "It's been great, really," he says of his career. "When you're 20 years old, you just want to be famous so badly, and I think it can be a real disaster artistically. There's a certain freedom in working in the fields of obscurity that I really enjoy. The writing of the songs and getting out and playing in front of people is really the kick for me, and actually always has been the kick." "At this point, the main obligation I have is to the

song," Olney concludes. "It's no longer a job or something external to me. Making music and writing songs is like being right-handed. It's just the way it is." "Writing from the point of view of historical characters has become one of Mr. Olney's most distinguishing talents, whether he's singing from the mind of a donkey that carried Jesus or imagining Jesse James's last bragging words before being shot by Robert Ford." - Neil Strauss, The New York Times "Any time anyone asks me who my favorite music writers are, I say Mozart, Lightnin' Hopkins, Bob Dylan, and Dave Olney. Dave Olney is one of the best songwriters I've ever heard, and that's true. I mean that from my heart." - Townes Van Zandt "Olney's prodigious talent grows: It may be a cliché to compare a songwriter to a screenwriter or a playwright, but if anyone deserves such praise, it would be Olney. His songs are rich with complex characters, unpredictable plot twists, and grand tragedies; they dramatize the brutality of evil and the quiet dignity of goodness...but with Olney, once he's got a listener's attention, he'll never lose it. Indeed, Olney's work provides the kind of pleasures that make the search for new music worth the trouble." - Michael McCall, Nashville Scene "David Olney has been a brilliant - and underappreciated - singer-songwriter for quite some time. Sort of an American Richard Thompson, the Nashvillian ranges from brooding chamber-folk to bluesy, down-and-dirty rock while writing piercingly intelligent and empathetic tunes that immediately engage both the head and gut..." - Nick Cristiano, The Philadelphia Inquirer "David Olney is a paleontologist of the soul...Olney is a wicked, astute, sly psychologist." - Geoff Gehman, Morning Call, Allentown, Pennsylvania "He writes both some of the most gorgeous love songs...and some of the most chilling character studies...that you will ever hear. And he delivers them with a mixture of grace and good humor that places him in the company of the very best of solo performers... Unlike most modern songwriters, Olney makes no big show of how sensitive he is. He just gets on with it, giving us human beings in all their glory and foolishness... David Olney isn't so much a singer, or a songwriter, as a tour guide for the human condition, the good and the bad that's inside us all." - Dave Ferman, Fort Worth Star-Telegram "David Olney: He has a talent for making the most classic tales work in vernacular music... The guy is so complicatedly good, it's scary." - Mary Armstrong, Philadelphia City Paper "The man runs with a mighty serious crowd, and he's got the goods to back it up. Even stripped down to an acoustic guitar and his gruff, expressive voice, his tales of woe and wisdom have the power to bring an audience to its knees." - Jeremy Tepper, Time Out New York "Like Randy Newman, Guy Clark, and John Prine, singer-songwriter David Olney Has a distinctively American voice, and that doesn't just mean his singing

voice. There's a swagger, a generosity, and a wise-guy wit in his writing that we associate with our national character, an appreciation for the underdog and the outlaw." - Jim Ridley, New Country "Looking for someone who can tug at your heart as well as kick you in the ass? Well, David Olney is the man for you." - Dirty Linen "David Olney has a lot of nerve." - Dave Marsh, Playboy

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