

Mp3 Rod Macdonald - A Tale Of Two Americas



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Hard hitting folk/acoustic music with a contemporary sound and a political bite to it. 18 MP3 Songs FOLK: Modern Folk, FOLK: Political Details: Reviewed in Folkwax 7/26/05 Thought-Provoking Honesty The American release of Rod MacDonald's A Tale Of Two Americas on Wind River Records contains eighteen songs - sixteen MacDonald originals (including a previously unheard pair from 20 years ago), one co-write, and a cover of an early Bob Dylan tune - while the Swiss Brambus Records version has one cut fewer. Both discs contain enhanced media, as well as links to a number of Rod MacDonald associated websites. The opening cut, "Ray Ron," recalls two Americans who recently died in the same week. Ray Charles passed at the age of 73 on June 11 last year, while President Ronald Reagan left from this mortal coil six days earlier, albeit with a two-decade head start over "The Genius." Across five verses, featuring the positives and negatives of both lives (and including the consistently silly public statements made by one in particular), MacDonald closes with the consensus that Ron should have the common sense (nay, the magnanimity) to suggest that "Ray had so much soul it filled him to the brim, instead of naming all this stuff after me they oughta name it after him." Yeah, right! MacDonald's 2002 studio collection, Recognition featured a pair of songs that referenced 9/11, namely, "My Neighbours In Delray" and "For The Good Of America." Between then and now, America has undertaken bloody, body-counting excursions in Afghanistan and Iraq and in "Terror" Rod delivers reflections upon those events and their repercussions back in the homeland - "Using fear for advantage you're doing more damage than even your enemy does." Later in this set, and drawn from the same well of inspiration, there's "Beloved Enemy" - which can be summed up by "if we didn't have any enemies, we'd sure as hell invent them (merely for the profit they bring)," while Rod opens verse two of "Sacrifice" with "Ah but those who say you have to go and fight/Never send their own to battle," and later "As long as there's enough

poverty/There'll be volunteers for the military/While the ones who run the show sit back and watch their millions grow." While not averse to penning love songs, MacDonald's lyrical approach has consistently been one that reflects upon a broad spectrum of social issues at home and abroad. Track two, "Missing," is inspired by the photographs of runaways that are displayed Stateside on milk cartons (and on posters in supermarkets and featured in public service commercials). This single issue remains an ill in modern American society that simply won't go away, and around one million missing child cases are filed annually. Abductions whether by family members, friends, or strangers are also an integral part of this issue (although statistics indicate they only contribute to 10 of the total), while 90 of the youngsters simply chose to run away because of difficult conditions within the family home. "The Governator" is a tongue-in-cheek tribute to the current Austrian-born Governor of California, and that rib-tickling vein also threads its way through the "what if this world was a much fairer place to live in" scenario painted in "Smoke." Social issues apart, MacDonald is also adept at delivering an engaging lyric based upon his own personal experiences. His 1999 song collection *Into The Blue* contained material inspired by his then-recent relocation from New York City to the sunny shores of Florida. Here, "I'm Your Dad" - "Hello there little girl, welcome to the world" - finds Rod reflecting with heartfelt affection upon the recent arrival of a small female person in his and his wife's life, while "The Lucky Ones" spotlights the hardships and the blessings that are integral parts of life, during the annual hurricane season down on the Gulf. The spiritually slanted "Here I Stand" - "For just another man am I who stands here pressed against this sky/Raising his voice on high to you out there" - is the oldest MacDonald composition here and dates from 1981 and is followed by the self-explanatory title "True Love" from 1985. Charles Dickens opened his 1859 novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, with the words "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" and MacDonald employs that sentence as the foundation of the "A Tale of Two Americas" chorus - subjectively the song is an early 21st century snapshot of life in his beloved homeland, and features the war-mongering billionaire minority as well as the hard-pressed masses who are barely getting by. The penultimate cut, "I Am Bob Dylan," is a tongue-in-cheek number based around the premise of mistaken identity, and MacDonald closes his latest epistle with the still very relevant, though now forty-year-old Dylan composition, "With God On Our Side." Time passes, one's life changes for better or for worse, but those major issues over which only governments retain control remain pretty much the same for the ordinary man. A new Rod MacDonald recording is always an event to anticipate and savour, since you

know that his lyrics will challenge your perceptions regarding recent historic occurrences, even shared events in ones everyday life, and he consistently brings clarity to those issues. That his songs are always leavened with thought provoking honesty seems to me to be a fair synopsis of his skill as a lyricist - think of a subtle version of Phil Ochs, if you've never heard a Rod MacDonald song. In terms of aural execution A Tale Of Two Americas is a stripped-down affair - wholly acoustic - on which Rod's voice and guitar are supported by the bass of long time musical associate and album co-producer Mark Dann, plus the mandolin, Dobro, and guitar of regular road warrior Steve Eriksson.

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